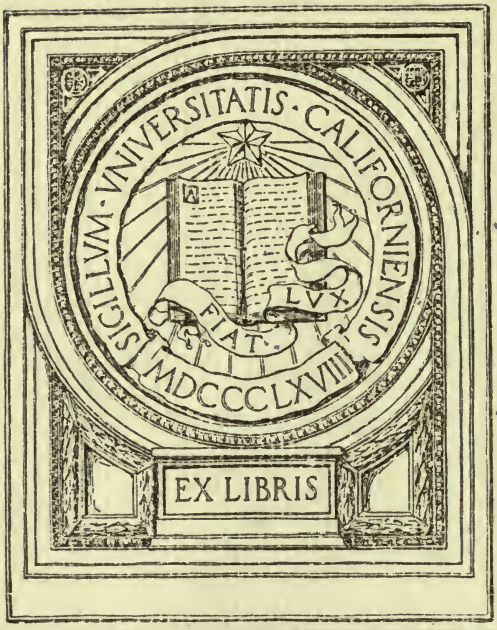
THEODOR FONTANE

KENNETH HAYENS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THEODOR FONTANE

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A CRITICAL STUDY

BY

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PREFACE

A STUDY of the foremost realist in German literature of the nineteenth century requires no apology. It has been my object in the present volume to deal in detail with the work of Theodor Fontane as a novelist, with the reservation that I have made no attempt to cover the ground of a possible source-book. The novels have not been taken in strict chronological sequence, but have been grouped, as the headings to the chapters indicate, rather with regard to their character. This method necessitated the giving of a separate chapter to *Quitt*, but this is not altogether to be regretted, for the serious student of literature must seek to understand failure as well as success. While in Chapters III., V., VI., VII., VIII., I have dealt conjointly with some aspects of the individual novels, this arrangement has not been followed in Chapter II. It appeared to me that, although from one important point of view *Vor dem Sturm* and *Schach von Wuthenow* go naturally together, the former novel will continue for many good reasons to be classed by itself. Despite certain hasty conclusions, the best appreciation of Fontane in a succinct form is that contained in R. M. Meyer, *Die Deutsche Literatur des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*. Not so satisfactory is that to be found in H. Mielke, *Der Deutsche Roman des neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*. Passing assistance may be derived from

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R. M. Meyer, *Gestalten und Probleme*; Erich Schmidt, *Charakteristiken*, Bd. II.; A. Biese, *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte*, Bd. III.; A Stern., *Geschichte der neuern Literatur*, Bd. VII. L. Pineau, *L'Evolution du Roman en Allemagne au XIXe Siècle*, is of no value; but the following papers are not unsuggestive: K. Frenzel, *Theodor Fontane als Erzähler*, *Deutsche Rundschau*, Oct., 1906, p. 1153; H. Hart, in *Velhagen und Klasings Monatshefte*, 1898–9, Bd. I., p. 362.; C. Busse, in *Velhagen und Klasings Monatshefte*, 1907–8, Bd. I., p. 927.

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I

Introductory

When Theodor Fontane published *Vor dem Sturm* in 1878, he was in the sixtieth year of his life. He was best known to the general reader by his accounts of his experiences in Great Britain and France, in peace and in war; and by his certainly excellent descriptions of the nobility and gentry of the March of Brandenburg. Forced to class him, the literary youth of the day would have given him a place amongst the ballad writers of the forties and fifties, upon whom it looked back in mingled pity and contempt. And at least one modern critic is content still to regard him, somewhat naïvely, primarily as a ballad writer.[1] Nevertheless, he became the first and has remained the foremost of the German realistic school.

If one familiarises oneself with the boyhood, youth, and early manhood of the novelist by means of his most interesting autobiographical volumes, *Meine Kinderjahre*, 1893, and *Von Zwanzig bis Dreissig*, 1898, one appreciates better his slow but sure development. Born in 1819 at the small town of Neu-Ruppin in the March of Brandenburg, Fontane was descended on both sides

[1] Prof. Koch.—Vol. II. of the *Geschichte der deutschen Literatur* by Friedrich Vogt and Max Koch.

from Huguenot immigrants. His father, a chemist, possessed little aptitude and less liking for business; as a consequence, the financial record of the family is distinctly chequered. His mother, although struggling staunchly to maintain her home on what she considered a fitting level, did not display much generous affection in dealing with its members. Yet, even while he remained under his parents' roof, Fontane would not appear to have passed an unhappy childhood. Swinemünde, to which town the family removed while Fontane was still very young, was not lacking in qualities which compensated to some extent for its rather forlorn situation; and the novelist always recalled it with pleasure. Nor were there wanting amongst its inhabitants persons who served in a lively fashion to awaken the boy's power of observation. This power of observation was, however, probably brought to bear more keenly upon his parents than upon others; and it is not difficult, with such excellent portraits before one, to remark those traits in father or mother which were transmitted to the son. If Fontane did not inherit what he describes as his mother's 'southern French hastiness,' [1] he profited greatly by a liberal measure of her willingness to work and of her desire to lead a settled, though by no means staid existence. In Fontane, the novelist, there is undoubtedly much of this mother who dealt not in fancies, but in facts. On the other hand, the son retained his father's generousness of disposition, love of striking figures, and arresting incidents, and habit of acquiring

[1] Although R. M. Meyer, in *Gestalten und Probleme*, describes the mother as of North French extraction.

scraps of knowledge of no apparent value. The father's unfailing interest in such a man as the Napoleonic hero, Latour d'Auvergne, has a direct significance when considered in connection with the son's early ballad production; while the elder man's motley collection of information became in the younger the basis of much characteristic conversational matter. It is possible also that his French extraction accounts in some part for the conservative use of French borrowings in Fontane's language.

The educational possibilities of Swinemünde were not of the highest order; and one is inclined to think that much the best thing that Fontane took with him to Berlin, whither he went to complete his schooling, was the good health which a liberal enjoyment of active games in the open air had bestowed upon him. If one is to believe his own account, he did not take the fullest advantage of the opportunities which a school in the capital could afford. Nor did the guardianship of his Uncle August, a dilettante and happy-go-lucky, tend to encourage him in the way of strict attention to duty. His schooldays over, he was apprenticed to a chemist, but his own interests were from the first literary. He mixed with budding writers, students, and young officers with artistic leanings. His scant resources were not greatly augmented by his contributions to the newspapers, despite the fact that he introduced himself to the editors both in prose and in verse. Nevertheless, he was always able to take an active share in the discussions and actual achievements of many literary clubs, the chief of these being that called the 'Tunnel.' Here

he distinguished himself by his considerable success in the ballad, success which later criticism has, on the whole, not sought to depreciate. Here, also, he made full use of his powers of observation upon a very varied assembly of men, differing as widely in their social standing as in their literary ability. With politics he was not concerned.

As a chemist's assistant he made the acquaintance of other German towns, particularly Dresden and Leipzig, in which he continued as far as possible his ordinary mode of life. During this first period of wandering an attack of fever almost proved fatal; while the after effects troubled him for years. Gradually his literary work became more remunerative; but it was not until after the revolutionary period (1848–1849) that he was able to rely upon the earning power of his pen. His volumes of poetry—*Männer und Helden*, 1850, *Gedichte*, 1851, *Balladen*, 1861—were well received; while he showed in such writings as *Ein Sommer in London*, 1854, *Jenseits des Tweed*, 1860, how well qualified he was to record impressions of travel. After his marriage, he lived for some time during the fifties in London as a special correspondent; and on returning to Berlin maintained his connection with the newspaper world. His connection with a paper was, however, never ruled by political motives. It is only in the most general sense that one can say that, without abating anything of his patriotism, he became ever more liberal in his attitude towards public questions. The fruits of a labour of love, which he never at any time wholly relinquished during a score of crowded years, are to be found in four volumes issued

between 1862 and 1882. These volumes, entitled *Wanderungen durch die Mark Brandenburg*, contain the tribute of Fontane to the land of his birth; and it is significant that, granting the all-round excellence of his work, he succeeds better in the portrayal of his compatriots than in the painting of the country-side.

During the campaigns which led up to the establishment of the German Empire, Fontane proved his ability as a war correspondent. Wrongfully suspected of being a spy, he was arrested and kept in captivity for some weeks. The most important outcome of this blunder was the entertaining record of his prison experiences, published under the title, *Kriegsgefangen*, 1871. His account of the war with France, published between 1873 and 1876, serves, in common with earlier accounts of the Danish and Austrian wars, as an illustration at once of his patriotic feeling and of his highly lucid style.

Fontane spent his later years in Berlin, occupied to the last either as journalist or novelist. And, although he thoroughly enjoyed holidays, short or long, in the country, he remained always a townsman, delighting in the endless food for contemplation afforded by the crowded streets. One or two outside honours, such as the doctorate of the University of Berlin, were bestowed upon him; but the really significant occurrences in an otherwise uneventful life were the appearances of his books. From 1878 until his death in the autumn of 1898, Fontane was before all a novelist. The sequence of his novels, more especially if one considers his autobiographical work as partly novelistic and written wholly from the novelist's standpoint, was broken

seriously only by the appearance in 1889 of *Fünf Schlösser*, a complement in essay form to the *Wanderungen*. Although finally enthusiastically acclaimed by the young writers of the day, Fontane did not enjoy success at every turn; indeed, he was unable in the first instance to find a publisher for *Stine*, which lay for several years in manuscript. On the whole, however, Fontane cannot be said ever to have been discouraged, as was Gustave Flaubert in his later years, by the reception accorded his work.

His bare record as a novelist reads as follows: *Vor dem Sturm*, 1878; *Grete Minde*, 1880; *Ellernklipp*, 1881; *L'Adultera*, 1882; *Schach von Wuthenow*, 1883; *Graf Petöfy*, 1884; *Unterm Birnbaum*, 1885; *Cécile*, 1887; *Irrungen, Wirrungen*, 1887; *Stine*, 1890; *Quitt*, 1891; *Unwiederbringlich*, 1891; *Frau Jenny Treibel*, 1892; *Effi Briest*, 1895; *Die Poggenpuhls*, 1896; *Der Stechlin*, 1898.

II

The Historical Novelist: *Vor dem Sturm; Schach von Wuthenow*

Despite his late beginning, Fontane reveals himself in *Vor dem Sturm* as dominated by the influence of that gifted historical novelist who took his theme from the story of Brandenburg and Prussia, the most distinguished follower of Walter Scott in German literature, Willibald Alexis.[1] He challenges comparison with Alexis the more especially as he elected to place his novel in the Napoleonic period, upon which the earlier writer had already drawn for two of his ablest works, *Isegrimm* and *Ruhe ist die erste Bürgerpflicht.* Whatever uncertainties may arise from such a comparison, one thing stands out plainly, that Fontane by no means followed his model so closely as Wilhelm Hauff or Alexis himself in his earlier work had adhered to the manner and methods of Scott.

The sub-title of Fontane's first novel is *Roman aus dem Winter* 1812 *auf* 1813, and in keeping with it the author attempts to picture the state of Prussia during the months which preceded the final liberation of the country from French control. His chief characters are

[1] A pen-name for Wilhelm Häring, who is generally supposed to be, in common with Fontane, of French extraction.

at home in the country which lies between Berlin, Frankfurt on the Oder, and Küstrin, and forms part of the Brandenburg to which Fontane was deeply attached; at the same time, he is not completely silent as regards the state and feeling of the two larger towns. The opinions presented in the novel are thus in the main those of the landed gentry and the peasantry; and they are presented in such a manner as to make a distinct impression upon the mind of the reader. One perceives the differences existing between those of the nobility who are or have been state officials, and those who have been soldiers: the former unwilling to implicate themselves, the latter anxious, albeit in varying degrees, to strike a blow at the enemy. One realises the slow movingness of the peasant's mind. On the other hand, one does not see sufficient of the townspeople to be in a position to remark more than, and even this in a rather superficial way, the general spirit of irritation. Discussions disguised as conversation are prominent enough to warrant the connection of *Vor dem Sturm* with such a novel as Heinrich Laube's *Das junge Europa*, in which they succeed in proving fatal to the general action and composition. Yet Fontane, although he cannot deny his relationship to the novelists of the Young German school, does not allow it to become too obvious. The verbal reviewing of the politico-military situation is, after all, only one of the means he employs in his attempt to bring his period to life. With his more usual types he contrasts such figures as that of the Polish nobleman, Bninski, who detests Prussia, as those of the thieves, taking full advantage of the troublous times, or as those

of the conventiclers who denounce all wars as unrighteous. Contrast, however, is not all at which he aims. He brings before one a lengthy series of men and women, such as one might well have met at the time; and he endeavours to recount the incidents in which they might naturally take part, to describe their habits, customs, enjoyments, and to reproduce the manner and topics of their conversation. As far as the individual parts are concerned, he is successful—in some cases, with the help of peculiarly realistic touches, highly successful; but there is a too strong resemblance to patchwork, which greatly reduces the value of the whole. If Alexis employs, as does Fontane, the art of the *genre* painter, he is able to supply at the same time something approaching a general focus for his pictures, and to conceal in part the considerable lack of concentration by the possession of an epic tone. The epic tone, the suggestion of a wide but connected movement towards a definite goal, Fontane does not attain; the general focus he would not appear to have sought to introduce. The life of the country gentry or small nobility is undoubtedly that which he is most effective in reproducing. Even here, however, there is a tendency to give only the culminating points in any particular line of action or development, a tendency due doubtless in some part to Fontane's early attachment to the Romantics, as also in part to his exercise of the ballad form. In dealing with other circles, Fontane is still more guilty of allowing scope to this tendency, whereby a disproportionate idea of the lives of the people concerned is bound to arise. An excellent example is his presentation of the Berlin lower-middle

class in its best clothes and on its best behaviour at Frau Hulen's supper-party.[1] Moreover, he follows mainly in the introduction of his characters a method which compares with that of the true novel, as does the method of the pageant with that of the drama. Thus Chapters VIII.–XI. are occupied by preliminary descriptions of a series of figures, with no attempt to show any need for the portraits to appear in a particular order, or to establish any real connection between the chapters. In making the reader acquainted with the circle of the Countess Amélie, he goes even further in the use of a convenient method, so far, indeed, as to suggest a museum catalogue. And he makes his own defence.

> It will be our immediate task to add a short characterisation to the mere introduction of these gentlemen who, with the exception of Dr Faulstich, had all reached or passed their sixtieth year. If this is an offence against the laws of good narrative, it is for the reader to be indulgent, more especially as the error about to be committed is more apparent than actual. For, however justified one may be in condemning the presentation of ready-made figures whose thoughts and actions are recorded on a ticket in their coats, and in extolling instead that narrative art which by the giving of mere suggestions makes it possible for the reader's own fancy to supply the development and completion, yet exceptions may be always allowed where, as here, this marshalling of ready-made figures purports to achieve little more than a *portrait gallery*, presented to the reader less on account of the pictures, than on account of the *place* in which they are found.—XX., 171.

The italics are Fontane's, and are important on account

[1] Cf. Ch. XL.

of the fact that he *is* accustomed to derive the *milieux* from the characters, and not vice versa.

Notwithstanding the deference which Fontane almost always shows to the Royal House, he holds firmly, in common with Alexis, that the country comes before the king, and that the service of his country is the first service of every man. He is not fortunate, however, in *Vor dem Sturm* in his attempts to convey an impression of his beliefs to the reader; there is a certain uncertainness in the atmosphere of the book which militates against his success. This indefiniteness extends to the plot, which properly speaking consists of two love stories; firstly that of Lewin von Vitzewitz and Marie Kniehase, the adopted daughter of a village magistrate, and secondly that of Tubal von Ladalinski and Lewin's sister, Renate. One is forced to add a third thread, the desire and failure of Lewin's father, Berndt von Vitzewitz, to strike a serious blow to the French power. This addition, however, does not greatly enhance the value of the connected action; one is inclined to think, wrongly perhaps, that the author was himself at times in difficulties as to how to proceed. The love stories do not bear close inspection; that of Lewin and Marie is the better, not on account of that well-worn device whereby the young man has first to be cured of a foolish passion for another woman, but because of the figure of Marie, which is so much more lifelike than that of Renate. In Renate, as also in her father, Fontane makes a first attempt to show that there are people born to be unhappy, an idea which in some later novels he freely developed; but though it is important at the opening

of *Vor dem Sturm*, it is by no means sustained. One can hardly assume from the scraps of Renate's diary given in the last chapter that she was particularly unhappy; indeed, according to what is known of the character of Tubal, she might have been much more miserable had he lived. The action as given is, moreover, too traditional, too much in keeping with that of similar novels, to carry a philosophical theory. There is, in consequence, no definite reason why the book should close with an elegiac-romantic visit to Renate's grave. Fontane seeks to strengthen the plot by means of the dream, as experienced chiefly by Lewin and Renate, and by foreshadowing passages, such as the following:—

> The stars came out more numerously than ever. Taking off his cap, Lewin let the fresh winter air blow about his forehead, and gazed wonderingly and reverently up into the glittering heavens. It seemed to him that every gloomy fate, the heritage of his house, fell from him, and that lightness and brightness from above entered into his soul. He breathed more freely.—I., 7.

Fontane never makes any effort, as Alexis at times certainly does, by manner and tone, if not in so many words, to ensure the interest of the reader by allusion to political questions or situations of his own time. This is due in part, undoubtedly, to the differing attitudes adopted by the two men with regard to the existent classes of society. Alexis is a militant Liberal, certain that the welfare of the state depends on the middle classes; Fontane, influenced, one suspects, by a predilection for high-sounding names and lengthy pedigrees, is a non-militant Conservative. Nevertheless, Fontane

introduces much more strictly extraneous matter than the older writer; without it, indeed, *Vor dem Sturm* would run to but quarter of its actual length. Some matter which might in the first place be classed as quite extraneous to the plot may be found, on closer investigation, to shed some light on the characters concerned in the plot; but this is unusual. As a rule, one must keep in view that larger picture which has already been discussed. The detail of this picture is mainly undeniably good, and it should not be forgotten that it has Mommsen's approval; but there are occasions when one is met by artificiality. It is more surprising still to find occasionally the same fault in those anecdotes, which, after the manner of Alexis, Fontane makes so prominent, and in the telling of which he already approaches brilliance. True, some of the anecdotes are illustrative of particular characters or circles in the novel, but the author is also concerned with another issue. He desires to establish the view that the anecdote is of the utmost value to the critic of man and of history; the desire arises from what he calls in the Introduction to *Meine Kinderjahre*, 'my partiality to the anecdotal.' It must be admitted that, on the whole, he introduces his anecdotes well, and demonstrates their value in the criticism of individuals. This value is not lowered when an anecdote is, on the face of it, not strictly true, so long as it has grown, and it invariably has so done, from the character of the person concerned. It is in the anecdotes purporting to be of wider historical application that one notes on occasion an artificiality which weakens the effect.

In view of what has gone before, it cannot prove unexpected to discover that *Vor dem Sturm* fails badly in proportion. More especially as Fontane has not yet perfected the art of making a strong point out of a small incident, one feels that in comparison with the actual action of the book the reported action occupies too great a space. Indeed, so much is introduced by the reporting method, that one is at times rather uncertain as to what is the actual action. Again, amongst many of the prominent figures, General von Bamme may be taken as an excellent example; the speech altogether outweighs what reflection is introduced. Even in the case of Renate and Lewin the balance is not rightly maintained, as the reflection indulged in by them is much too general. And although it has to be admitted that here and there, most noticeably in the case of Berndt von Vitzewitz, he does for a time achieve something approaching a true proportion between speech and reflection, it is obvious that he has no definite method of weighing the one against the other. If the proportion of action to description is at least passable, there is, on the other hand, an obvious disproportion between action and speech. Yet it must be remembered that the continual suggestion of something about to happen is in part justified in illustration of the actual suspense of the time. Where the author best holds the balance is between the tendencies towards comedy and tragedy; and it must be insisted that only tendencies are present. Not one of the deaths recorded, not even that of Tubal, affords anything definitely tragical in quality. There are, however, many passages in which Fontane, by means of that

good-humoured irony which became one of his most strongly-marked characteristics, avoids what a lesser writer would have eagerly adopted, that lugubrious tone common to false tragedy.

In those scenes which are designed to arouse excitement, this gift of observing humorous detail is often detrimental to the effect of the whole. Thus in the series of spirited scenes which comprise the effort of the volunteers to wrest Frankfurt from the French, one is too greatly tempted to turn aside from the course of the action in order to laugh at the grotesque figure of General von Bamme on his Shetland pony.[1] In a more general manner the effect of some scenes is undoubtedly weakened by the too confidential, almost friendly, way in which they are given. Nevertheless, that between Marie and Tubal in the church proves that a tense scene is not beyond his powers.[2] The weight which is placed upon conversation has much to do with the general lack of continuity in the scenes throughout the novel. A natural sequence does occur when the action becomes more spirited, as during the rescue of Lewin from prison; otherwise continuity is practically confined to those scenes which present a company before, at, and after table. There are scenes which, even in so loosely constructed a novel as *Vor dem Sturm*, strike one as being particularly unconnected with the others. Such are, for example, the sitting of the literary club 'Kastalia,'[3] and the visit of Berndt von Vitzewitz and Geheimrat Ladalinski to the old Prince Ferdinand, brother of Frederick the Great.[4] The number of persons appearing

[1] Ch. LXIII. [2] Ch. LXVIII. [3] Ch. XLIII. [4] Ch. XXXVII.

in the individual scenes varies greatly. Those scenes in which only one character appears make a sparing use of the monologue. Scenes with two characters are occasionally important: besides that between Tubal and Marie in the church, may be mentioned that between Berndt and Kniehase.[1] But what one may call the group scenes are, on the whole, the best; and here Fontane inclines to the social side, irrespective of the class of character introduced. It should be noticed here that there is a very great similarity between the group of peasants who assemble in the village inn at Hohen-Vietz and the corresponding group in *Unterm Birnbaum*. The similarity makes it the more easy to recognise how much surer the novelist has become in the handling of such a scene. Fontane's method of presenting an excursion, preferably into the country, in a loosely connected group of short and often rather indefinite scenes is already to be found here: it is to be seen best in connection with the sledge drive to Lehnin.[2]

It will be inferred from what has been said on the scenes that the settings are both outdoor and indoor, but in either case, especially in group scenes of a social nature, the setting is quite subordinated to the atmosphere. Fontane's indoor settings are never given in complete detail, and, indeed, he is frequently satisfied with the merest outline. A room in any type of house is presented only in its significant qualities; but although more is made of the furnishings when they are calculated to create an impression, it must be allowed that they are kept within the bounds of probability. Fontane is

[1] Ch. XXX. [2] Ch. LI.

not guilty of transferring something which might well appear in a nobleman's drawing-room to another and utterly incongruous position. His accuracy in this respect points to the realistic method pursued in the collection of the material. The church setting, for which Fontane has always a liking, remains here very indistinct. Outdoor settings are no fuller than the indoor, neither does he attempt, where this may seem to be called for, to make them continuous even in outline. He confines himself to occasional pictures of circumscribed but suggestive surroundings for his characters; but these pictures are not yet so finished, nor do they possess the same certainty in design and execution as in later novels. Fontane cannot be said to exhibit much anxiety as to his settings, whatever be their nature, and is obviously of the opinion that a few selected touches are as a rule sufficient to provide a background for the characters.

In the exposition of these characters Fontane is extremely uncertain. This is due in great part to the lack of completeness and want of concentration in his methods. He relies chiefly on his own remarks on the characters, at the same time introducing that criticism of one character by another which he later so fully and skilfully developed. Definite psychological analysis is to a great extent negligible, neither can the speech be taken as a safe guide to character. On the other hand, Fontane does make use of incident in the exposition of character; laying the stress not on the larger, but on the smaller incidents. Thus there is Lewin pleading for clemency towards Hoppenmarieken,[1] or helping the

[1] Ch. XXXIV.

French soldiers who have returned to Berlin after the great disaster in Russia;[1] Tubal going back, at his own imminent risk, to rescue the wounded dog;[2] or Kathinka dallying with Lewin, when she has determined to fly with Bninski.[3] These examples serve notably as an immediate proof that Fontane was already conscious of the value of incident in the exposition of character, but they point also by the proportion in which they are chosen to an early weakness, the over-illustration of likeable qualities.

The characters themselves are drawn from varying social spheres, and constitute a group of men and women of every age. Children are not represented. In keeping with the nature of the time, there are more men than women. It is to be remarked that Fontane obviously feels more at home in presenting a member of the landed aristocracy, than any other type of person, with the possible exception of the clergyman. He is happier also amongst the peasants than amongst the townspeople, even if his knowledge of them is not more extensive. His middle class consists of the doctor, the lawyer, the clergymen, or the student; and, again with the exception of the clergyman, he is not zealous in its portrayal. As a rule his middle-class characters are shown, not in their typical surroundings, but mixing with the aristocracy, a circumstance which is productive of much uncertainty as to their value. And, irrespective of class and sex, the characters, on the whole, are not very clearly drawn; indeed, many of them leave no definite impression upon the mind. In this may be recognised an effect

[1] Ch. XLVIII. [2] Ch. LXXVII. [3] Ch. LI.

of the study of Alexis, one of whose outstanding weaknesses is unreliability in properly combining the traits and qualities of his characters. Some of the names have been well chosen : there is undoubtedly a suggestiveness about the sharp aggressive sound of Bamme. In the attempt to provide this suggestiveness, Fontane sometimes sinks into what smacks of artificiality, as in the case of Niedlich, as a name for a haberdasher. On the other hand, there are excellent contrasts as between the solid Othegraven and the soft Seidentopf. What naturally strikes one first, if one considers the speech of the characters, is the marking off of the peasants and in part of the servants by their use of Low German, and of the Countess Amélie by her very free use of French. Beyond such obvious means of differentiation, Fontane does not go in the majority of cases; here and there one finds, perhaps, the beginnings of a genuinely characteristic manner of speech, but these beginnings are developed only in Bamme, Seidentopf, and Frau Schorlemmer.

Admitting, as one must, that Fontane has drawn in *Vor dem Sturm* many good figures, one is likely to be disappointed with regard to the number of actual living characters. Here again one finds in places a promise which is not fulfilled, particularly amongst the figures from the lower orders. Just as in the matter of scene handling, an excellent comparison may be made between the value in character drawing of the peasant group in Hohen-Vietz and the corresponding, but better developed group in *Unterm Birnbaum.*

A study of the leading characters results in the giving pride of place to such as are, in differing manners,

grotesque. These are General von Bamme, Hoppenmarieken, and Frau Schorlemmer. The General is a rather unpleasant little man with bandy legs and a repulsive face; but he inclines to grow on one, as he certainly did on Fontane. One would not desire to copy either his manners, or his taste; but one is inclined to be indulgent on account of his innate dislike of hypocrisy. It is not often that even a retired cavalry officer would admit he felt more comfortable on a Shetland pony than on a charger. He is avowedly fond of good wine and an after-dinner jest. If, in keeping with his dislike of the Church, he adopts a devil-may-care attitude, he is still much attached to the undisturbed enjoyment of the moment. And his attachment to ease does not induce him to shirk his responsibilities. It is true that there is a Romantic colouring about him: for, though fond of gambling, he dislikes gambling with men's lives; thinking lightly of women, he admires the really good woman. Nevertheless, Fontane has achieved in him a living character, an achievement due in no small part to the skilful management of the speech. This is, on ordinary occasions, light, sarcastic, bordering on the indelicate, but when the speaker is in sober mood it allows one to see that the old General has not lost his grip on affairs, while its pointedness remains unaltered.

As her name suggests, Hoppenmarieken is also an oddity, with her dwarfed and deformed body, and her ugly face. Fontane shows considerable skill in keeping her from becoming an impossible monster, as there is certainly a danger of her doing. He assists himself

greatly by confining her talk within the bounds of likelihood, and in not exaggerating her witch-like attributes. Cunning is her chief characteristic. Despite her greed and her selfishness, she is careful to restrain her malice; determined to take advantage of the latitude allowed her on account of her mental deficiency, she will not do so too obviously. But if one feels that her collection of birds is more for display than out of love, one cannot determine whether she is attached to Lewin merely through self-interest, or whether she actually entertains some sort of affection for him. Or again, as concerns her reputation as a witch, one cannot definitely say that she seeks to keep it alive any more for the purpose of concealing her affairs from prying eyes, than merely in order to satisfy her human vanity. The presence of these uncertainties goes, however, to show that in this disagreeable hag with the remarkable walking powers Fontane has succeeded in creating more than a mere figure, to be labelled at will. One has for her what one cannot have for so many figures in the novel, a living interest.

Frau Schorlemmer, the housekeeper, is a Moravian and consequently challenges comparison with another Moravian, the lady's companion, Julie von Dobschütz, in *Unwiederbringlich*. On the whole, it would appear that Fontane was hardly so successful with the corresponding character in the later book. Frau Schorlemmer's firm religious convictions afford her a definite standpoint in most questions, a standpoint which she maintains well, under difficulties. Nevertheless, she is wise in restricting her propaganda work to very modest

dimensions; it shows most, in negative fashion, in her horror of Bamme. In this connection she reveals, and this is a touch which does much to bring her to life, her ignorance of the world as it goes. Nevertheless, she is not a crank, but a very capable person; and one believes her genuine, before one learns of her missionary work in Greenland. It may not be much to his credit that Fontane has saddled her with the habit of planning marriages for those she knows, a rather common device for putting life into elderly ladies, but he certainly does well in allowing one to realise, without too great insistence, that despite her rather colourless outlook she finds life very tolerable. Her speech is decisive, but not rudely assertive; while her vocabulary is in keeping with her opinions. And this is in perfect harmony with that sense of superiority proceeding from her feeling of security, but which does not lead her into arrogance.

In Marie, Fontane has achieved a character mainly by suggestion. His method is to keep the suggestion along one line; and to restrict the speech of the character, so that there can be no danger of its introducing a disturbing element. He helps himself in the first instance by introducing Marie as the child of a showman and of a mother unknown, a circumstance which in itself places her apart from any other figure in the novel.[1] The qualities which are most prominent in her, unobtrusiveness, charm, and personal dignity, all tend to single her out from the other young women, even from Renate.

[1] The story of Marie's birth is reminiscent of that of the young officer in Spielhagen's *Problematische Naturen*, who was the son of a showman and a Russian princess.

Lewin is a fairly successful presentation of an unformed young man whose ideas soar a little higher than those of his fellows. His speech corresponds to this description of him, suggesting often the desire to express something inexpressible, and being marked at times by hesitancy. A trait that gives life to this character is the conscious revolt against blind patriotism. There is occasionally a suspicion of romantic exaggeration in the drawing; but it should be remembered that in this case one's rather uncertain recollection of the character is justified by the fact that Lewin is not at all sure of himself.

None of the other characters reach the standard of those discussed; but two of them offer points of interest to the student of Fontane. Seidentopf, the clergyman, is, in common with the novelist's favourite clerical type, not a dogmatist, while, on the other hand, he is an antiquarian, as also is Petersen in *Unwiederbringlich*. In dealing with Berndt von Vitzewitz, he surveys his life prior to the events in the story. This method of obtaining what might be termed a reasoned basis for a character is one he frequently employs in later books.

The opinion of one of the characters as to the events described in the novel is made to supply the title; and it is of interest to note that the words have been spaced for the sake of emphasis. Seidentopf, in reviewing what lies behind them, says :—

'They were stormy days.'
'And yet days *before the storm*!' replied Hirschfeldt.

The title is certainly well chosen as applying both to the period of the story and to its widely descriptive manner.

The chapters vary in length, but offer no great contrasts. In the earlier portion of the novel there is often no immediate connection between the chapters. which, indeed, sometimes correspond to single, unconnected scenes; towards the end they show more tendency to run into one another. The chapters, which have headings pointing straightforwardly to the contents, occasionally end in a striking manner.[1] Obviously, Fontane is experimenting with the nature of chapter endings; some look forward to coming events, some, but in too artificial a manner, fall away, while others can be classed only as indefinite. At times, instead of beginning a fresh chapter, Fontane makes use of asterisks; and there are the beginnings of the employment of this device in order to mark off the doings of the various groups of one large company.

Fontane experiments here also with differing means of adding expressiveness to the narrative. He does not, certainly, interpose in the first person until the closing lines of the novel are reached, but throughout he takes the reader into his confidence by the use of the first person plural. Thus he frequently speaks of 'our hero,' or 'our friends.' Occasionally he goes further still, as the following quotation will show :—

> In the hall a few logs are still smouldering. Let us put on some fir-cones, draw in a few chairs to the hearth, and chat about Hohen-Vietz.—II., 12.

In the last chapter he has recourse to the diary—kept

[1] Cf. for example, Ch. LXXVII, where Hoppenmarieken is sitting at the side of the road, frozen to death.

by Renate von Vitzewitz—in order to give the reader some glimpses of the later history of the chief characters. Letters, on the other hand, are much more liberally introduced. Their main value lies in giving details of events which the author does not wish to describe immediately; but one occasionally finds a suggestion of that important part in the exposition of character which Fontane in later novels makes them play. A considerable amount of verse is scattered throughout the novel. One can find ballads; popular, religious, and topical verse, and other fragments not easy to classify. In almost all cases these pieces are fittingly introduced and lend colour to the narrative. It is of interest to note that a few lines of verse given in the first chapter make a great impression upon Lewin; a similar experience is recorded of the Countess Holk in *Unwiederbringlich.*

Fontane's style in *Vor dem Sturm* is that which least betrays the follower of Alexis. If one indicates that he does occasionally, in common with the older writer, go too far in the assumption of frankness, one has pointed to the sole important thing which would suggest a relationship between the two styles. Where Alexis is writing at his best he undoubtedly touches a standard of excellence to which Fontane does not attain; but, in general, Fontane's style is greatly to be preferred. Alexis is often difficult to follow on account of an overabundance of words whose values have not been weighed, and because of unusual figures of speech. In particular, many of his similes are devoid of all spontaneity. Fontane, on the other hand, writes in a pleasurable manner which is well adapted to a protracted narrative,

and shows but little variation in standard throughout. His style is, on the whole, not remarkably different from that of the later novels. In the ease of the sentence structure may be seen a true mark of confidence. But in certain particulars he differs from his later style; thus he uses at times very long paragraphs, but only very rarely notably short ones; and correspondingly one finds here long sentences which in the later books would certainly have been subdivided. Neither is his judgment as to the best context for a remarkably short sentence fully developed. What most attracts attention in his vocabulary is the use of foreign words. It is true that much of the French introduced, especially that used in connection with the Countess Amélie, may be accepted as topical colouring; but everything is not to be accounted for in this way. Nevertheless, it will be found that foreign words are in some later novels more liberally employed. French words are much more common than Latin ones; while borrowings from other languages are practically negligible. As with the single words, so with foreign phrases: some later novels show many more examples. One finds here already, however, certain French and Latin tags to which he is always partial.[1] A peculiarity of Fontane's style which later assumes great prominence is present here, although, considering the length of the novel, it cannot be said to occur frequently. This is the employment of the rhetorical question which is sometimes, but not always,

[1] Cf. *pour combler le malheur, toujours perdrix, à la bonne heure, comme il faut, de tout mon cœur; nomen et omen, alea jacta est.*

accompanied by an answer. The following is a clear example of a favourite type :—

No, I hate nothing more than this playing at soldiers. And why? Because I have been a soldier and look at the thing seriously.—LXIII., Vol. II., 131.

On the other hand, there is little evidence of that effective use of parenthesis which later becomes one of the outstanding marks of his style. Finally, he is sparing in the use of dots to represent unfinished speech, showing in this matter better taste than in many later novels.

As in the style, so in the choice of subject matter, Fontane already displays much of what is most characteristic in his work as a novelist. He is chiefly interested in the human characters of the story, which are drawn, as has already been seen, from the aristocracy, the professional class, the citizen class, and the peasantry. Special mention should be made, however, of the beginnings of his study of the domestic, male and female. But if one examines some of the characters more closely, one will recognise that Fontane cares more for the opinions they express than for themselves. Nature, animate or inanimate, occupies but little room. It would not appear that Fontane here made such use of his experience in the writing of travel books as Alexis had formerly made of his. To Lewin's Newfoundland, Hektor, he devotes some attention; indeed, he associates him with the final fatality, as he afterwards does with the Newfoundland in *Quitt*.

A large proportion of the subject-matter must be

sought in the various discussions which occur throughout the book; for Fontane greatly prefers treating of things through the conversation of the characters, to interposing obvious author's reflections. He touches only lightly on religion, although on two occasions the outlines of Seidentopf's sermon and definite extracts are given. Moreover, he exhibits a strong tendency to talk round religious subjects. The political opinions of the period, which are always coloured by military views or wishes, occupy a considerable place in the conversational matter. Literature is not altogether neglected, although it claims attention only by fits and starts. There is some discussion of the Romantic school, particularly Tieck and Novalis; and somewhat less on Hölderlin, and such subjects as ballad writing or verse translation. As has already been suggested, much matter outside the action of the novel is supplied by anecdotes; these are of a family, court, or more generally historical nature. They centre, frequently, round such figures as Louis XIV., Frederick the Great, and his brother, Prince Henry, Henry of Navarre, Napoleon. In the form of the reminiscences of subsidiary characters, one learns something of the Napoleonic wars in Spain and Russia. Nor should it be forgotten that Fontane introduces here what he takes up later in *Cécile*, questions centring round the Ascanian House in Brandenburg.

In the provision of subject matter, Fontane has in two obvious instances drawn upon personal experience. The accounts of the sittings of the 'Kastalia' literary club have arisen from the author's knowledge of actual literary clubs, more particularly of the 'Tunnel.' The

success of the ballad writer in the 'Kastalia' naturally reminds one of Fontane's remarks in *Von Zwanzig bis Dreissig* concerning the lack of success of Storm's lyrics at the meetings of the 'Tunnel,' as against the enthusiastic reception of his own ballads. Again, he has turned to profit here his investigation of the residences of the nobility and gentry; in fact, it is doubtful if he shows such a decided interest in describing this class of building in any of the later novels, save *Unwiederbringlich.*

It is natural that one should ask, in considering an historical novel which is set in an important period of the history of its author's country, what is the attitude of the author towards his country. The question here must be answered in the first place by asserting very definitely that the author's standpoint is patriotic, but in the best sense. Looking back certainly from the calm heights of achievement, Fontane displays no traces of chauvinism; while he is more generous than Alexis in his treatment of the enemy. In criticism of the state he is not backward, but his position in this respect is rendered freer by his love of the actual land, and his belief in the intimate attachment of any man to his native soil. Through this love and this belief may be explained in part Fontane's interest in the nobility. The ultimate outcome of his patriotism is, as has been observed before, that where and when necessary the land must come before the king.

The king is there for the sake of the land. If he detaches himself or allows himself to be detached from it by weakness or false counsel, he breaks his oath and frees me from mine.—XXX., 259.

And in continuing this line of argument with regard to the kingship, he disowns the doctrine of divine right.

> Away with this false doctrine, the child of sycophant priests. It is a human ordinance, which comes and goes. But our love for our land and our home is lasting as the land itself.—XXX., 260.

The reading of *Vor dem Sturm* will not cast any great light on the author's attitude to life in general, of a philosophy it would be absurd to speak. One can detect likings, such as those for literature, for furniture, for antiquities; one notes a certain indifference to nature. He is more attracted by culinary than by millinery questions; he dabbles in dreams and in liberal theology. In later books, it may be observed in passing, his interest in the non-dogmatic teacher of Christianity grows so steadily, that one wonders at times if he wished he had been a clergyman of the liberal school himself. On the whole he treats of life in a rather gossipy manner. True, he does not shut his eyes to its dark side, nor avoid in the least the portrayal of misfortune and death; but this dark side appears to make no actual impression on him. Life seems to interest him more as a peep-show than as the gravest of problems; and so he does not stop to criticise it save in a fleeting and unconvincing manner.

Whereas it has been possible in speaking of *Vor dem Sturm* to class Fontane briefly as a follower of Alexis, this cannot be done in judging his other historical novel dealing with the same period, *Schach von Wuthenow*. Not only must other influences be taken into account, but it must also be conceded that Fontane has definitely

outgrown all sense of reliance on other men's methods. That *Schach von Wuthenow* is a novel, despite the fact that Fontane chose as the sub-title, *Erzählung aus der Zeit des Regiments Gensdarmes*, cannot be a matter for dispute. The mere suggestion of the scope of the book is sufficient to decide into which category it falls.

By presenting to the reader in Schach a favourable, if typical member of Prussian society and of the Prussian officer class, Fontane desires to show how impossible it was for Prussia at this stage in its history to maintain itself, when brought into contact with living reality. Indeed, although Schach is explicitly stated to be above the average of his class, he becomes at times almost, if not entirely, a symbol of Prussia. A hollow conception of 'honour' as the highest virtue had made the class which controlled the country a veritable sham. Thus von Bülow writes to Sander, commenting on the military caste :—

> I was a member of this army long enough to know that every third word there is 'honour.' A dancer is charming 'on my honour,' a white mare is magnificent 'on my honour'; I have even had money-lenders introduced to me who were superb 'on my honour.' And this continual talk of honour, of a false honour, has confounded men's conceptions and killed real honour.—XX., 328–9.

There can be no doubt that in so far as Schach stands for his country, Fontane is fully successful in leading up to and suggesting the final catastrophe. One recognises that whatever his good points may be Schach cannot lead his life, except in accordance with a preconceived code, a code, which being degraded, is often

contrary to right action and to reason. But there is something of more directly human interest about Schach than his symbolic value; and around this is woven the plot of the novel. Fontane clearly and without exaggeration demonstrates the weakness of a man who attempts to face life, while dependent on outward appearances and the opinion of others. Going further, he shows that this life of masquerade is so dear to the man who leads it, that no other will satisfy him; it is in this way that the suicide of Schach becomes inevitable.

In a final sense the figure of Schach is only one of many, a unit in the society which Fontane desires to bring before the reader. In order to present this society, the author is content with some twenty short chapters; nevertheless, his picture is admirable. By leaving aside the representatives of other social spheres, Fontane has been able to concentrate upon the one which, as was seen in *Vor dem Sturm*, makes most appeal to him. Only he has in various ways given more significance to his characters, by depicting or suggesting their relations with more exalted personages. The reader learns from his pages of the indifference or blindness of society at large to the questions which so vitally affected it, of the marked ineffectiveness of the army leaders, of the younger officers' blatant frivolity at so grave an hour. He realises the over-great love of decorations and the exaggerated deference to inherited rank; he infers that if the highest circles are not lacking in humanity, they contain no one able to face a situation fraught with dangers and difficulties. Fontane assists himself greatly in his task, and much more surely than in *Vor dem*

Sturm, by the manner in which he contrives to connect the differing parts of his picture by means of personages who most naturally appear in more than one. Schach himself is rightly most used in this respect. Further, he adds to the sense of fullness by alluding to social sets which do not actually come within his purview, such as that of the Countess Haugwitz, or that of the Princess Radziwill; such allusions arise legitimately in the course of the action, and are not merely artificially and forcibly introduced. When considering the society that Fontane has painted, it should be recalled that he did not aim at reproducing a society which was so decadent that it was bound of itself to collapse. Thus the goodness of heart, the decency, the self-respect which are exampled in the novel are by no means out of place. Nor can one agree with an able critic [1] that Fontane definitely intended to warn the nobility against 'self-conceit'; *Schach von Wuthenow* does not suggest that its author had any pedagogic ambitions. Rather is Fontane concerned with showing that the Prussian state of the time could not withstand an enemy who, careless of tradition and convention, was directly aggressive; he does, that is, show proof why Schach should stand for Prussia. Prussian society is represented not as wholly rotten inwardly, but as possessed of a petty spirit, fond of trifling, given to acting rather than to action, and trusting in an army whose soul is dead. With the shadow of Napoleon cast across the land, society can expend its wits on a conspiracy against Schach; and Schach can take a life better offered on the battlefield.

[1] R. M. Meyer in *Gestalten und Probleme.*

Schach's suicide forms the catastrophe of a plot without complications. Captain von Schach, along with other military and non-military gentlemen, is in the habit of visiting at the house of the widow von Carayon and her daughter, Victoire. The society of these ladies is attractive. Schach is equally courteous, although one is allowed to suppose that he prefers the mother. Victoire is zealous in the attempt to effect a marriage between the mother and the Captain; but the elder lady is not inclined to further these plans. The actual position appears to suit Schach, who is not enthusiastic about the married state. Then, in a moment of capricious passion, he compromises himself with Victoire, whose liking for him has been slowly developing. But Victoire, once a beauty, is pock-marked, and Schach cannot rid himself of the fear of the gibes of his acquaintances—a fear which is magnified by the marked malice of certain cartoons which depict his relations to both ladies—and he is appalled by the prospect of the unpretentious existence to which he considers a marriage with Victoire must condemn him. In consequence, he wavers in his obvious duty. The mother, to whom Victoire, following on a nervous collapse, has confessed the truth, claims the king's protection; and the king, sending for Schach, gives him the choice between marrying Victoire and leaving the service. Schach agrees to the marriage, though without enthusiasm; but later waxes enthusiastic over the honeymoon he proposes. Nevertheless, immediately after the marriage ceremony he commits suicide, having resolved to observe his promise, not in the spirit, but merely in the letter.

It will be remarked at once that there is here a very much more definite central action than in *Vor dem Sturm*. In a sense, it would seem that by freely sacrificing length, Fontane was better able to control the narrative construction. While retaining many excellent individual sketches and portraits, he has given them to a great extent an appearance of unity, by choosing a plot which allows of a considerable background. Thus he achieves a concentration which Alexis, save in *Die Hosen des Herrn von Bredow*, does not approach, although he does not abandon that art of *genre* painting which he learnt from the earlier writer. Indeed, as he always remains faithful to that art, one might be justified in saying that Alexis, as he was the first, was also the strongest influence on his work as a novelist. The survival of this influence in later books is often overlooked, mainly it would seem because they are not historical novels. Moreover, the point of honour is suggestive of Alexis's *Isegrimm*. Yet one has to look farther afield if one would find something outside the author's natural development which will account for the differences existing between *Schach von Wuthenow* and *Vor dem Sturm*. Arising out of Alexis's episodic method, there had formed itself a school of story-tellers who, instead of adding one episode to another, chose only one and expanded it to cover the action of an historical novel. Perhaps the most accomplished of this school was Georg Hesekiel, with whom, in his capacity as editor of the *Kreuzzeitung*, Fontane came, at one time, in frequent contact. Without falling into the journalistic error of attempting to extract overmuch from his data,

Fontane undoubtedly learnt something from such writers as Hesekiel. First and foremost comes the concentration of the action forming the plot; and then, more particularly in the case of Hesekiel himself, the use of a more natural and less ornate manner of speech. The many errors of a class of fiction essentially ephemeral, Fontane avoided with excellent taste and faultless judgment.

The consideration of the matter that on a first examination may appear to be unnecessary to the plot reveals the skill with which Fontane has constructed the novel as a whole. Indeed, it is possibly there that one meets with the best example of Fontane's method. It will readily be admitted that everything introduced is strikingly illustrative of the character and mental attitude of the time; but it can be shown that nothing is entirely foreign to the proper working out of the plot. One may perhaps affirm that all that is necessary to the plot might have been compressed into a smaller compass, but one must consider also how much the plot would thereby have lost in effectiveness. Thus the restaurant scene in Chapter II. might be said to be rather too prolonged; yet it gives the reader not merely opinions of Schach from men who knew him, but also a fuller idea of these men with whom the hero, consciously or unconsciously, is compared. Again, the space allowed to Prince Louis's supper-party must be judged in connection with the atmosphere which the novelist desires to create. It will not be condemned as too liberal, if one realises in how far it was the atmosphere of this supper-party, the interest of the Prince in Victoire, and his

insistence on the '*beauté du diable,*' that aroused in Schach a latent passion. After the event the author advances, a little baldly perhaps, his own view, which may be found in Bülow's last letter to Sander.

> Well, what was the position? An officer is a frequent visitor in an aristocratic household; he is attracted by the mother, and, on a fine day in May, by the daughter also, perhaps, or let us rather say probably, because Prince Louis, a few days previously, had discoursed to him of the '*beauté du diable.*'—XX., 329.

The officers' skit on Werner's *Die Weihe der Kraft* serves to throw light on Schach's character, and as the motivation of Victoire's nervous collapse, resulting in the confession to her mother and the subsequent course of the plot. Chapters XX. and XXI., following on the catastrophe, are in part explanatory, but more discursive, leaving the reader, as he should in such a narrative be left, still debating the character of the central personage.

Schach is a royalist, a supporter of all that is established; and he carries with him the outward dignity of the true Conservative. His very name, if lending itself as it does to the jests of others,[1] suggests also that there is something in which he differs from many; this something is his continual use of the consciously dignified manner. Yet it would be unfair to assume that he has killed every quality leading to warmer and more generous behaviour. His manner of dealing with the

[1] Especially in the matter of the cartoons where it is made equivalent to *Schach,* meaning Shah.

old peasants who are caretakers at his house at Wuthenow is sufficient proof to the contrary. Underneath his stateliness there is concealed no design to injure any one; a man who at all times means well needs no cloak to his actions. Similarly, however wrong some of his views may be, the error is always an honest one. He can get to the point, but only by stages; thus it takes time for him to describe Prince Louis, where Sander or Nostitz would have succeeded in a sentence.

> The Prince is my gracious master, and I love him *de tout mon cœur*. There is no call to insist upon that. But he is a light with a considerable shade, or, if you will allow me the comparison, a light with a stranger in it. Altogether he is possessed of that doubtful excellence of so many royalties, the being equally conspicuous in martial and amorous adventures, or, to put it still more bluntly, he is alternately a prince of heroes and a prince of rakes.—VIII., 247–8.

Along with his conventional religion goes the carefulness of his speech, which he breaks into only upon rare occasions. Indeed, the author has made the most skilful use of the speech throughout. One finds that it suggests a fixed superior position, while it indicates at the same time an inability to follow quick argument. Again, all the conversation suggests that he makes things personal, and goes even further in supposing most things to revolve around himself; yet there is nothing blatant or unpleasant in the manner. Everything here is consonant with what one sees of him in action. While allowing to others the right of thinking and living as they will, he reserves to himself the belief that his is the fitting way; and the

author, in the active and actual demonstration of this belief, has no recourse to forced methods. Any attack on his foibles appears to him as a direct attack on himself, and in consequence he is more than ordinarily hurt by such an attack. It follows, then, that such a bitter personal insult as is contained in the cartoons can be sufficient completely to destroy his mental balance. And, in the last instance, he can imagine himself as living, in keeping with his own ideal of himself, only under certain conditions. Thus, however much one holds him guilty of mental cowardice, one must concede that to him life, under the conditions in prospect, could not have been worth while.

In the first instance one finds it difficult to class Victoire. She is not introduced in Fontane's usual open manner, but seems rather to slip into the action unawares. And there remains something uncertain about her to the end, despite her apparent frankness. Correspondingly there is a tentativeness, often passing into provocativeness, about her speech. In obvious contrast to Schach, she is fond of ending her remarks with such queries as, 'Or am I going too far in saying that?' 'Am I right?' But as the quips she is rather fond of making are not altogether of a harmless nature, so she can talk in the most decisive tones, where a suitable opportunity occurs, as, most notably, in the conversation with Schach concerning Prince Louis. The author, in a semi-symbolic manner, draws attention to this characteristic in her answer to Schach's invitation to a drive. Excusing herself for not naming any destination, she adds :—

'But when the decisive moment arrives, it will of itself cause us to choose aright.'—IV., 199.

It is significant that fond as she is of making points and offering antagonistic views, she generously agrees with everything that Aunt Marguerite, the ingenuous spinster, has to say. Victoire is essentially feminine, and possibly more of a woman by reason of her lost beauty; and this lost beauty is undoubtedly a great influence in her life. Recognising that, on account of her misfortune, it is hard for her to discover people's actual opinions about her, she is always more or less feeling her way. This is very notably the case in the critical scene with Schach.[1] In the end, also, the continual uncertainty as to her personal standing proves an obstacle to her acute mind in the drawing of conclusions. She comes to believe that she can counterbalance Schach's idea of himself. Proud, sensitive, longing for a real and not a sham content for her life, Victoire is undoubtedly a woman fully in love. This is the final impression left on the mind by her letter which closes the novel.

Frau von Carayon is essentially a woman of the world, with all the wisdom of experience. If she does not parade her knowledge, or boast of her ability to speak, she is yet equal to holding her own in any company. In a mild way disillusioned, she is therefore rather watchful than bitter. She desires things to proceed in a peaceful and pleasant manner wherever and so long as this is possible. So she cuts short discussions which become too heated, and introduces new subjects at most opportune junctures. But she is capable of unpleasant action, when it is, to

[1] Chapter VIII.

her mind, necessary; witness her carrying through of the personal petition to the king with regard to her daughter's marriage. As a rule, she manifests good taste in all matters, is not prudish, is above affectation; but what she herself calls the 'bourgeoise' appears in the aspersions she casts upon Schach's family;[1] while the check to her will causes her to give way to injured vanity, when she exclaims :—

I have my plans ready now, and I will humiliate him, as surely as he wished to humiliate us.—XV., 300.

On the other hand, it is perfectly consistent with her character that after the gaining of her point she should desire immediately to resume friendly relations with Schach. Fontane is especially successful in the management of Frau von Carayon's language. It is never, except in those instances where she is acting against the grain, artificial; while, whatever the casual colouring may be, it goes straight to the point. It is not wholly undistinguished, but only rarely does it strain after brilliance; it is self-possessed, and suggestive of a definite but not exaggerated personal dignity. It may well be noted here that Fontane, exercising due care, does not introduce his favourite Latin tags into the speech of his women characters.

In von Bülow is presented, in the main, a talking character. One gathers by the way that he is a political free-lance, with military experience, and unwilling to touch on matters which have no bearing on actuality.

[1] Chapter XV.

Constantly at war with the society through which he passes, he is overfond of trying to impose his opinions upon others. He doubts the value of everything established, is cynically ironical in his references to petty royalties,[1] but has succumbed to the genius of Napoleon. He is properly given to the use of classical snippets, in agreement with a former idea of a well-read man. Fittingly also there is but little variation to the tone and manner of his speech; he is always the orator addressing an audience with a view to effect. An excellent example of his manner is afforded by his gibe at kings who have been surnamed 'the Good.'

'As a rule such royal personages are possessed of a large harem and small intelligence. And if they go to war, some Cleopatra must accompany them, immaterial whether with or without a snake.'—VI., 229.

Sander, the publisher, is an excellent foil to von Bülow. The very name, without the particle, is arresting in its aristocratic surroundings. The man himself is representative of the apparently easy-going, but really astute, *bourgeois* who, at that period, was worming his way into the upper circles. Careful not to push himself, he can always come up to the scratch if called upon; and the scene in the restaurant [2] indicates the conditions under which he is most at home. If he has a broadly material manner of envisaging life, he is not wholly without principle, as may be seen by his refusal to publish

[1] Cf. especially his remarks on the intelligence of Serenissimus and Serenissima in Chapter II.

[2] Chapter III.

the scurrilous cartoons. In complete contrast to von Bülow, he expends great care on his speech, and invariably makes points with which every one is certain to agree. Moreover he displays no real enthusiasm over matters artistic or political; and uses his classical tags in a jesting manner.

Several of the subsidiary characters are particularly useful in completing a survey of the officer types of the period. Beginning with Schach, one passes to von Alvensleben, a weaker variation of Schach, liked by every one, essentially a good fellow, but not entirely without ability or individuality. Then comes von Nostitz, in whom Fontane has given us an admirable sketch of the careless, pleasure-loving officer who, though without any ideal, is not destitute of possibilities of better things, and whose very assurance, not deteriorating into mere braggadacio, prevents him from measuring himself against genuine difficulties. Finally one gets a glimpse of the von Zieten type, men who are soliders because of their family, not because of their aptitude, and with whom a kind of bitter impudence seeks to cover incapacity.

With two exceptions the minor characters are ably suggested. Fontane achieves this success mainly through such conversation as is assigned to them; but in the case of General von Köckritz and the soldier-servant Baarsch he assists himself by sketching the personal appearance. Moreover, in the case of the King and of the Kreepschen, he relies to a certain extent on the description of the surroundings. The exceptions are the Queen and Prince Louis. The failure with the Queen is not

of much consequence, but with Prince Louis it certainly calls for comment. Two chapters [1] are in great part devoted to him, and he is fully discussed elsewhere; yet one obtains no distinct impression of him save that he is partial to pointed anecdotes. Although he speaks frequently, his speech does not forcibly distinguish him from von Bülow. Fontane would appear to have relied overmuch on the reader himself having some fixed ideas with regard to the Prince.

In the exposition of the principal characters, Fontane makes use of author's direct remarks, but he introduces and applies these remarks with more certainty and less stiffness than in *Vor dem Sturm*. He displays an even greater advance in the skilful management of the conversation to allow of the characters criticising one another; while there falls to be added the opinion that the characters express on themselves. In this last way Fontane adds greatly to the uncertainty which attaches to Schach and Victoire. The author further exhibits a truly remarkable improvement in the proper use of speech as a characterising medium, a fact which has been sufficiently indicated in connection with the individual characters. But, more particularly on account of the general excellence, occasionally defects cannot be overlooked. Whereas picturesque phrases, sometimes rather far-fetched, are suitable in the mouth of von Bülow, one can hardly accept the following, as being true to Frau von Carayon's character :—

'But look how our friend Bülow is sitting there in the manner of Minos and Rhadamanthus.'—I., 174.

[1] Chapters II. and VII.

Or again these pointed words are out of place on the lips of von Alvensleben where he is refuting the suggestion that Schach will marry Frau von Carayon :—

'If there could be any further doubt on this point one circumstance would remove it, and this one circumstance is called : Victoire.'—IV., 193–4.

It is errors of judgment of this kind which lead to the charge levelled by some against Fontane, of making all his characters speak alike. On the other hand, an excellent example of Fontane's clear and direct introduction of a character which is in itself a refutation of the assertion that he knows nothing of personal exteriors, but is interested solely in the spoken word, may be found in the first chapter. After introducing von Bülow, the author proceeds :—

The stout gentleman beside him was the publisher of his writings, Herr Daniel Sander, in other ways, at least as far as appearance was concerned, his complete opposite. A black beard framed his face which expressed as much sarcasm as content, while his coat of holland cloth, fitting close into the waist, held in his *embonpoint.* What completed the contrast was the finest white linen, in which Bülow by no means excelled.—I., 174.

Excellent examples of Fontane's exposition of character through incident have already been given. Small incidents frequently carry great weight, as Schach's desertion of Victoire for her mother on the return to the village,[1] or his attendance at service in the village church.[2] The arrangement of the skit on *Die Weihe der*

[1] Chapter IV. [2] Chapter XIV.

Kraft provides an excellent opportunity, which is well taken, to illustrate the characters of the various officers. Immediate psychological analysis, although effectively employed here and there in a short and sharp manner, is hardly so important as any of the preceding methods in the exposition of the characters. Chapter XIV. contains a certain amount of psychological analysis of Schach, and the succeeding chapters show some continuance of the method. On the whole, however, Fontane, being conscious doubtless that his figures already lived, did not consider himself bound to any very painstaking work in this direction.

In certain ways the scene management shows little difference from that in *Vor dem Sturm*. Scenes may introduce one or several characters, but there is a preference for group scenes, and in these the male predominate over the female characters. There is no definite correspondence between scenes and chapters; in fact, the same scene may last through more than one chapter.[1] As a rule the scenes relax in tensity at the end. Certain characters may be carried over to take part in another scene, in which also new characters appear;[2] but this is not usual. In the group scenes the characters are not generally paired off, but remain free to take part in the common conversation.[3] Indistinct scenes, such as those which take place in connection

[1] Thus, Chapters I. and II.; VI. and VII.

[2] Thus von Bülow, Sander, and von Alvensleben are carried over from the opening drawing-room scene to the restaurant scene in which Nostitz is introduced.

[3] This pairing off is, however, carried out for obvious reasons in Chapter IV.

with the preparation for the wedding, are infrequent. The scenes are interrelated mainly through the instrumentality of a single character.[1] It is natural that the scenes in *Schach von Wuthenow* should show a more immediate relationship than those in *Vor dem Sturm*; and Fontane here avoids the error of overdoing any particular type of scene. Nevertheless, the present scenes and those of the earlier book show this obvious mark of coming from the same pen: their importance lies, except in a few instances, not in the action, but in the conversation.

The predominant settings for the scenes are those which would naturally occur in the life of the officer of the period in Berlin; but, as in *Vor dem Sturm*, Fontane does not elaborate them in the least. And even where this series is broken the atmosphere is so maintained as to recall the principal setting which is found in Frau von Carayon's drawing-room. The indoor settings outweigh the outdoor, although these cannot be said to be neglected.[2] Clearness in outline marks most of the settings, but it should be noticed that the author is not averse to leaving the reader to supply the setting.[3] On the other hand, he may become rather liberal with detail with regard to settings which he is not going again to employ.[4] Yet, even for Frau von Carayon's favourite

[1] So those in Chapters XII., XIII., XIV. by Schach; or those in Chapters XV. and XVI. by Frau von Carayon.

[2] Cf. Chapters IV. and XIV.

[3] So in Chapter X., where he speaks of the 'Guardroom of the Regiment,' and leaves it at that.

[4] Cf. the accounts of the restaurant in Ch. III., and of Mother Kreepschen's best room in Ch. XIV.

room he does not descend to actual details, but mentions those things which contribute most to the particular impression of the interior.

> But even on quiet days it was a charming room, at once distinguished and comfortable. Here lay the Turkish carpet which had witnessed the grand days of the House of Carayon in St Petersburg, almost half a generation ago; here stood the timepiece in malachite, a present of the Empress Catherine; and here, above all, was displayed the richly gilded pier-glass which had every day to assure the fair lady afresh that she still was a fair lady.—IV., 197.

The settings are not indicated by the conversation of the characters; but the author's own methods remain quite impersonal. Passing comments from the author are infrequent. Such an incidental judgment as the following therefore stands out more clearly. In speaking of General Köckritz, Fontane says :—

> He thoroughly confirmed the doctrine that a kindly disposed royal entourage is always much to be preferred to a gifted one. But these private servants of a prince should not, however, be also servants of the state, desirous of having a hand in the decreeing and the ruling.—XVI., 306–7.

The author on one occasion obtrudes his own view of the course of the action, where he exclaims :—

> Poor Schach! It was written otherwise in the stars. —XIII., 275.

Only once, also, does he return to the 'our hero' habit which was so marked in *Vor dem Sturm* :—

The Persian Shah was, however, simply our Schach, and indeed most tellingly and speakingly portrayed.—XIII., 276.

But he associates himself and the reader in a striking manner with the historical past :—

The conversation which was then being carried on seemed to centre round the mission which Haugwitz had just previously accomplished, and which, in Bülow's opinion, had not only re-established a desirable understanding between Prussia and France, but had also brought us the possession of Hanover as a 'dowry.'—I., 174.[1]

The author never introduces himself in the first person.

The association of writer and reader so directly with the past raises doubts as to the suitability of the subtitle, *Erzählung aus der Zeit des Regiments Gensdarmes*. It leads one almost to believe that some such word as '*Bilder*' should be substituted for '*Erzählung*'; for there is certainly matter contained in the book that is not essential to a bare 'tale.' On the other hand reflection brings one to see that the 'pictures' chosen are interconnected in such a manner as all to have bearing upon the main themes, and that there is no suggestion of one having been included solely for its own sake. Accordingly, it would appear right in rejecting '*Erzählung*' to substitute '*Roman*,' as being more comprehensive and constructionally better warranted.

Deviating from his method in *Vor dem Sturm*, Fontane does not appear here to make the chapters of any

[1] A further example will be found in connection with the review in Ch. VIII., 242–3.

particular length; in fact, there are some striking differences in length.[1] Whether or not the chapter corresponds to a scene, there is a general tendency to mark off the chapters one from another, advertised by the retention of headings which serve as good indicators.[2] In perhaps unconscious agreement with this tendency, there is in some cases where one chapter passes into another a more or less defined change in the character of the conversation.[3] As in *Vor dem Sturm*, Fontane exhibits no real liking for startling or abrupt chapter endings; but he inclines more strongly than before to endings that fall away. The following is possibly the best example of his manner: coming after Schach's desertion of Victoire for her mother on re-entering the village :—

> Aunt Marguerite asked for the back-seat, so as not to have her face to the wind.
>
> No one objected. So she took the seat granted her; and while all reflected in silence on what the afternoon had brought them, they went back to the town at an ever increasing speed.
>
> Twilight had already fallen upon the town, when they reached the slope of the Kreuzberghöhe, and only the two Gensdarmes towers with their domes still rose out of the gray-blue mist.—XIV., 216.

Asterisks as a divisional mark are very rarely employed; the author having arrested the tendency which

[1] As between Chs. IV. and XIV. on the one hand, and V. and XI. on the other.

[2] Some, however, are of a very general nature: III. Bei Sala Tarone; XIV. In Wuthenow am See.

[3] So in I.—II., from politics to art.

was noted in *Vor dem Sturm* of using them, instead of beginning a fresh chapter. On the other hand, Fontane introduces them very skilfully at the crisis of the novel [1] to mark the change which has come over the relationship between Schach and Victoire. It is somewhat strange that he does not again introduce them with such signal success. The use of asterisks to divide the conversational units of a group does not find favour here, although Fontane later developed it with good results.

In the management of the letter, a great advance over *Vor dem Sturm* is noticeable. Letters occur very frequently, and at times extend to a whole chapter;[2] on other occasions they are only partially given;[3] and sometimes they are recorded in a paraphrased form.[4] While letters are used in order to state or to criticise the situation, they are made at the same time to throw light on the character of the writer, which should undoubtedly be the grand aim of the introduction of letters. Something else may be made out of the impression produced on the recipient, and the consequent deductions as to the latter's character;[5] the letter from Victoire von Carayon to Lisette von Perbandt takes the place of reflections where it is not feasible that Victoire would unbosom herself to any of the characters who share in the action. Again the letters passing between von Bülow and Sander, in Chapter XIII., while undoubtedly important in illustrating the writers' characters,

[1] Ch. VIII., 250. [2] So Chs. V., XX., XXI.

[3] As that from Lisette von Perbandt to Victoire, VIII., 245–6.

[4] So the letters from Schach to Frau von Carayon and from Frau von Carayon to Schach in Chs. XIII. and XVIII.

[5] So in the case of Victoire reading the letter in Ch. VIII.

also render a meeting between them unnecessary. There can be no doubt that, despite the proportionately large amount of space devoted to the letters, they are employed with consummate skill and contribute in full to the strength of the novel.

While all the important characters write and receive letters, not one makes use of a diary. Moreover, in great contrast to *Vor dem Sturm*, the present novel contains only one piece of verse,[1] and this has no real significance outside the moment.

The insistence which has been laid upon the importance of letters, as of conversation, in the economy of the novel, may result in the arising of doubts as to its excellence with regard to proportion. The consideration of the real relationship between the letters and the conversation will do much to dispel these doubts. If the first four chapters offer much in the way of speech, and but little in the way of reflection, it has to be remembered that the letters which follow serve to expose the reflections of the chief characters. In the minor characters one is bound to observe the lack of reflection, and one may be inclined to criticise the lack of proportion here exhibited. Nevertheless, two things must be taken into consideration; firstly the extent to which the speech is self-revealing, and secondly the undeniable fact that man thinks mainly of the spoken word of those whom he has no opportunity or inclination to study deeply. Actually then there is no real room for unfavourable criticism in the minor characters; and, if the value of the letters is borne in mind, the same conclusion will be

[1] The song from Werner's *Die Weihe der Kraft*, given in Ch. II

reached with regard to the important characters. The contrast between the strong reflective quality in Victoire, and the strong talkative quality in her mother should be sufficient to corroborate the conclusion. It has been seen how, in *Vor dem Sturm*, Fontane successfully held the balance between the tendencies towards the tragic and the comic; here, where the tragic is so much more fully developed, his success is equally marked. There is nothing engineered in his humour, every point proceeding naturally from the course of events. Even towards the close, when the cloud is lowering significantly, the possibilities of humorous touches are not overlooked. An idea of Fontane's ability to blend humour with underlying tragedy may be gained from Schach's conversation with Baarsch concerning his marriage.[1] Although definite action is not too abundant, one cannot say that it is outweighed by the descriptive matter. Indeed, apart from the fact that there may be rather too much reported action contained in the anecdotes introduced, it can be said that this novel is as perfect as one may well expect.

The anecdotes introduced may have some reference to the characters, as in Frau von Carayon's account of the Carayons of the Crusading epoch; but, on the other hand, they may merely form part of the general conversation.[2] The conversation undoubtedly gains in variety by the use of these anecdotes, of which the following, where Prince Louis gives his opinion of Lombard,[3] is an excellent example :—

[1] End of Ch. XVII. [2] As particularly in Chs. VI. and VII.
[3] A figure in the political and diplomatic life of the period.

'Ah, Lombard! I do not take Lombard seriously, neither do I forget that he is half French. Besides, he has a type of wit that disarms me. You will know that his father was a *friseur* and his wife's father a *barbier*. His wife, who is not only vain to the point of insanity, but who also writes wretched French verse, comes to him and asks which is more beautiful: "L'hirondelle frise la surface des eaux," or "l'hirondelle rase la surface des eaux"? And what is his reply? "I see no difference, my dear: *L'hirondelle frise* is a compliment to my father and *L'hirondelle rase* to yours." '—VI., 224.

But even apart from the anecdotes the subject-matter is well diversified, and not apt to drag on the score of sameness. Fundamentally, what is under review is the manners and morals of adult individuals belonging to the aristocratic and educated class; but within this class differing groups are exhibited, in such a manner as to give an idea of the class as a whole. As has been seen, the principal characters differ in many ways, but they are all connected by the education which is lacking to the general mass of the people. The representatives of the people are introduced more as an ornament, or as an essay in character suggestion, than as an essential part of the subject-matter. Much more consciously a part of this is the attitude which each of the developed characters takes to life. As in *Vor dem Sturm*, no attempt is made to deal with child life.[1] A picturesque description of a flock of swans,[2] and some passing references to horses and dogs exhaust the author's dealings with animate nature. Nevertheless, the habits of the dog have been

[1] In Ch. IV. the sexton might just as well have been introduced as his daughter.

[2] At the end of Ch. VII.

carefully observed. This same accuracy of observation is present in the little he gives of inanimate nature; his touches are of an unhesitating and convincing order. He makes no approach to pantheistic adoration, or lyric wraptness, showing rather the unfeigned but limited appreciation of the normally cultured mind. The subject-matter which is contained within the speech of the characters is mainly of a political and politico-military nature. The position of Prussia in relation to France, the state of the Prussian army, and the effectiveness of the governing class provide for considerable discussion; indeed, the scanty references to art and religion are not easily remembered under the conditions obtaining. The attempt at visualising contemporary amateur criticism in Werner's *Die Weihe der Kraft* is nevertheless interesting.

Fontane's style in *Schach von Wuthenow* is marked not only by the certainty of his command over words, but also by his ability to achieve a fitting exposition of the changing subject-matter. There is no stumbling or seeking, everything appears to be in exact order, and there are but few chances of suggesting possible variants in the reading. Again, it is not a style that seeks after effect; its pointedness is a composed pointedness. It tends to draw the reader into the author's mood, rather than to blind him to this, the better to startle in places. He relates his anecdotes in such a way as to induce the comment: 'How good!' rather than: 'How smart!' There is no useless verbiage, but clearness and conciseness; yet the style remains intensely alive and human. It is suggestive of a well-informed and sympathetic, if

occasionally a little sarcastic, reviewer of life. It shows very rarely any tendency towards the grandiloquent or the pathetic. It is educated in an easy manner, and contains no indications of any particular moral standpoint. With no signs of stiffness it is essentially pleasurable to read, but demands attention in order properly to be appreciated; for Fontane is not accustomed to prepare the way for or signal the appearance of any peculiarly brilliant passage.

Consideration of details shows that paragraphs of varying lengths are well mingled; while quite short paragraphs, except in speech, are of rare occurrence. Similarly, short and long sentences are skilfully balanced. The words employed are those which would naturally come to an educated mind. There is no attempt at using words which might be impressive by their length or strangeness, nor, on the other hand, any effort at keeping to simple and commonplace terms. The scraps of dialect introduced serve to throw more into relief the actual tenor of the vocabulary. Even in these scraps of dialect the words are natural, and Fontane is in no danger here of falling into the absurdly artificial speech which so often mars a novelist's work. In considering the use made of foreign words and phrases, it must be borne in mind that much may be allowed here, as in *Vor dem Sturm*, to be illustrative of the time. Nevertheless, the French employed extends only occasionally to full sentences, no character speaking it with such predilection as the Countess Amélie. The scraps of English coming from Schach's groom [1] may be said to achieve

[1] At the end of Ch. XIX.

the desired effect. The use of foreign words extends throughout the speech of all characters, as throughout the non-conversational portions. Borrowings from French are most numerous, followed by those from Latin ; English, Greek, Italian, Spanish, each provide some addition to the vocabulary. Of interest are the composite words which arise through the union of a German with a foreign element.[1] In contrast to his method with foreign words, Fontane only very rarely employs here foreign phrases or tags of any nature outside the conversation, so that one may regard them more particularly as a colouring element. As in *Vor dem Sturm*, French and Latin tags take pride of place, being followed here by the merest dash of Italian; they are almost always well known.[2] An occasional scrap of botanical knowledge is offered.[3] Proverbs appear more frequently than in *Vor Dem Sturm*, and they are not necessarily German.[4] As Fontane customarily writes without striking metaphors or similes, one's attention is the more readily arrested where his language becomes picturesque, as in the following short passage :—

It is the same in love as at Morgaten and Sempach, the fair knights are routed, and the ill-favoured peasants triumph.—VII., 239.

[1] Of this type are: *Tapisserierahmen, Portièrenteppich, Spiegelkonsole, Adelssphäre.*

[2] *De tout mon cœur, jeu d'esprit, à la guerre, comme à la guerre; nomen et omen, post festum; va bene, tutti quanti.*

[3] Cf. *asperula odorata Linnei.*

[4] *Man soll seinem Feinde goldene Brücke bauen; mieux vaut tard que jamais; chi va piano va sano.*

The self-put or rhetorical questions that were noticeable already in *Vor dem Sturm* are found here in varying types. There is the type with the almost entirely formal question :—

'Believe me, your little hand will not tie the knot you wish to tie. It is impossible, it cannot be so. I know better. And why, now? In the end, I love you only.' —IV., 200.

But there is also a type with a longer question form, which is here distinctly commoner. The answer frequently follows directly.

'I ask you, what is beauty? One of the vaguest conceptions.'—VII., 238.

Again Fontane brings in this use even in the little Low German he gives,[1] a fact which weighs with those who desire to show that he has but one style in which all characters must speak.

A feature of Fontane's style in *Schach von Wuthenow*, which recurs in later books, is the employment of a word or two words in the form of an individual sentence. The following is an excellent example :—

'He goes from one reception to another and preaches the cheapest of all wisdom, wisdom *post festum*. Laughable.' —IV., 208.

[1] For examples see the language of the peasant couple in Ch. XIV.

Something akin to this is seen, where he carries over an idea from one sentence into another, as thus :—

'A wondrous shadow that weighs three times as much as the object that throws it. An absolute Mammoth.'—IV., 208.

Frequent use is made of this method of carrying over part of an idea, instead of including it in the same sentence; and in this connection Fontane must be charged with writing with an eye to effect.

One has to remember that the author was well past sixty when *Schach von Wuthenow* was written, and therefore not only more able, but also more likely to regard life in a contemplative manner, than if he had been even some twenty years younger. Considering his treatment of the moments when the passion between Victoire and Schach reaches its height, in which warm sensuous descriptions are entirely lacking, one is inclined to fall back on the writer's age for the explanation of his avoidance of the directly emotional. On the other hand, vehemence, a quality often met with in old people, is not to be found in Fontane. Marks of the author's journalistic training and activity are not wanting. From this comes in part his liking for dealing with human character and action in the anecdotal form; and to it may be traced his ability in introducing passing observations which help to colour the scene or render it more lifelike, without entering into the painful details of the ultra-realistic school. Again, his journalistic habits and experience certainly help to fit him for the employing of a free conversational tone which does not descend to

actual looseness.[1] As in *Vor dem Sturm*, one finds indications of the author's love of country, although he does not insist upon them. Rather, he postulates a similar love in the heart of the reader, and does not seek to arouse it by exhortation. Not contemning other lands, he offers no hyperbolical praise of his own; indeed, he preserves an actual freedom of criticism towards its institutions and even towards its ingrained beliefs. Certainly he is averse to everything which tends to become over-systematised, and so too mechanical in its workings. The manner in which he opens his story without any apparent effort, without any obvious seeking for an opening, points to an assurance rising from familiarity in dealing with various types of people. And this familiarity is undoubtedly in part responsible for the impartial attitude which he himself adopts towards the characters. It is his to display, not to denounce. He is not tinged with the bitterness of those critics who insist on reviewing life from one self-chosen and unalterable standpoint. If he illustrates human failings, he is content to abide solely by the illustration; nor is there any suggestion that he is maliciously scoffing at man. His study of life would appear to have arisen more from love of life itself than from any desire to supply a commentary. Thus he does not care to confine himself in any way, but moves from the peasant's cottage to the king's palace, from the drawing-room to the guard-room, takes the reader walking, driving, boating, with equal freedom and equal interest. Again, if he is not given to noting details in general, he considers

[1] Cf. especially the conversation in Chs. III., VI., VII.

them of importance where they are a guide to character;[1] and in such instances he believes in correctness of observation. Accuracy before rhetoric is a rule he never breaks. It may be that he does not seriously enter into religious topics, simply because he feels himself unable to expose in an accurate manner differing beliefs; or it may be he hesitates to approach a subject wherein the tranquillity necessary to precise observation could not be maintained. As it is, one obtains the impression that religion does not arouse the author's sympathy. Indeed, there seems to be no cause with which he is bound up heart and soul. Life appeals to him as something very interesting to observe and analyse, but one feels that, if the hands pointed the other way, he would say with Schach :—

'What is life? A question of minutes, the difference between to-day and to-morrow.'—XVII., 315.

From this proceeds in part no doubt his tolerance, as also along another channel that suggestion of fatalism which the reader cannot escape. But Fontane is willing to meet what must come with a shrug of the shoulders and a quip on his lips. His attitude reminds one of what he says in *Von Zwanzig bis Dreissig*[2] of the soldier's life :—

One has to put up with it as one's fate, or else one must possess that famous indifference which regards praise and blame equally as a joke—otherwise one can't go through with it.

[1] Cf. his insistence on Aunt Marguerite's mantle and gloves.

[2] Edition of 1898, Berlin, T. Fontane, page 247.

Schach von Wuthenow, written in an admirable manner, presents in sharp outlines an incident of acute psychological interest, with a most suitable background, and an ending in complete accord with the characters concerned. It not only marks a great advance on *Vor dem Sturm*, it is also handled in every particular with as consummate a skill as the best of the later novels, and surpasses anything of Fontane's in the matter of proportion.

III

The Story-Teller: *Grete Minde; Ellernklipp; Unterm Birnbaum*

One might suppose from the qualification appended to *Grete Minde*, which runs *Nach einer altmärkischen Chronik*, that Fontane is still working to some extent at least under the influence of Alexis; neither would the supposition be incorrect. Nevertheless, helped by the study of other models, Fontane presents here a novel of concentrated narrative interest which Alexis could not have achieved. The other models are those offered by the writers of criminal stories with an historical background, writers who, it should be remembered, worked out in full one of Alexis's tendencies. Through these Fontane developed his own ability for narration, without in any way sacrificing his personal qualities in style and general construction. Even if it is admitted that in a general manner all the three books to be treated of in this chapter are similar to scores of others written in the same period, yet there remain always these personal qualities of Fontane which put them on a level above such contemporaries. The centralisation of the interest in *Grete Minde*, corresponding to that in *Schach von Wuthenow*, is in itself a breaking away from Alexis, and an approximation to the method of Hesekiel; while the

weaving of a story round a criminal act, although it be in the main taken from historically accredited fact, brings Fontane in contact more particularly with L. Parisius. For Parisius goes very much further than the other criminal-story writers in the conversion of a tale into a novel; and it must be insisted upon that each of the books to be considered in this chapter is a novel. It is certainly true that they contain stories of a type greatly in vogue at the time they were written, and no one would maintain that Fontane could have written them without examining to some extent the methods of successful contemporaries. Yet two things must be taken into account. Firstly, Fontane was not without earlier experience of his own in story-writing for magazines and newspapers; one may recall here the account he gives in *Von Zwanzig bis Dreissig* [1] of a criminal act round which he was encouraged to construct a novel. Secondly, he never forgot that it was his aim to cover a larger canvas.

Fontane's works of fiction have been indifferently classed as *Romane und Erzählungen*, or *Romane und Novellen*. As regards *Erzählung*, reference may be had to the discussion of its use in the sub-title of *Schach von Wuthenow*. It is undoubtedly inadequate. The term *Novelle* presents greater difficulty. R. M. Meyer says of *Grete Minde* [2]: 'Apart from earlier trifles, it is Fontane's only *Novelle*.' But the *Novelle* is a form of fiction essentially of not too wide dimensions in which the interest, however aroused and directed, lies all in the

[1] P. 32 ff.
[2] In his *Deutsche Literatur des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*.

one direction. The author who attempts this literary *genre* must stand or fall by one criterion. This criterion, however, does not always remain the same. Thus Heyse is to be judged according as he achieves in greater or less degree a single and unified action, Storm according as he maintains an unbroken mood or atmosphere, or Grillparzer as he rivets the attention on one character alone. But *Grete Minde* does not display any one of these varieties of unification, nor indeed any other form that might be postulated. It approaches most nearly at once the singleness of action and that of mood; [1] but there are passages sufficient to destroy any claim to achievement. Three examples will suffice: the scene of the players feasting in the inn, the description of the May Festival, and that of the visit of the Elector. Certainly *Grete Minde* is unusually centralised, as far as Fontane's method in fiction is concerned; but a *Novelle* it is not. And what holds of it holds even more decidedly of *Ellernklipp* and *Unterm Birnbaum.*

Fontane aims in *Grete Minde* at showing that not only are some people doomed to unhappiness, but that they will drag others into misfortune. An introduction to Trud and Gerdt is sufficient to assure one that under their roof such a girl as Grete could never be happy, while the mixture of shyness and boldness in her character would necessarily make life difficult for her anywhere. Grete, with her mixture also of Spanish and German blood, wavering from passionateness to love of a peaceful home, can be saved from misfortune only by

[1] Which may recall Hans Hoffmann's efforts to produce the one within the other.

a great display of will-power on the part of some one befriending her. Valtin, however, is a youth too easily led. Accordingly, it happens that far from saving Grete from unhappiness, he is himself brought to misery and ruin. One almost foresees that if Grete's pride is humbled in vain, she cannot remain sane; and the fact that one feels no surprise when her reason goes, shows that Fontane has carefully prepared the way. An unprepared transition of this nature is always dubious, even to the most uncritical. Again Fontane succeeds in showing that whereas the love of self in Trud is held in bounds by some feelings of decency and some obedience to principle, the mania for money in Gerdt, being in a sense impersonal, will lead him to any lengths and destroy in him every vestige of humanity. Force alone can withstand it. And if only through their silence when Grete makes her final appeal, he depicts in an unforgettable manner the low standard of human sympathy frequent amongst the burgesses of Tangermünde. Yet R. M. Meyer again goes too far, when he asserts that *Grete Minde* is 'an opposition piece to Willibald Alexis's glorification of the citizen class of the Old March of Brandenburg.' [1] If Fontane had consciously willed to write something which should be entirely opposed to Alexis's conception of the citizen class, he must have gone about his work very differently. It would have been necessary for him to have shown this class acting as a whole in a manner which would be construed as being peculiar to it; but, actually, he

[1] In his *Deutsche Literatur des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*. This view is taken also in ***Gestalten und Probleme***.

makes no attempt in this direction. Gerdt and Trud are characters familiar in all literature, and not tied to any one class, age, or country; and Fontane does nothing to minimise this general quality which they possess. As regards the reception of Grete's appeal to the Town Council, one cannot help feeling that it is exactly the reception which town councillors would at all times accord such an appeal. Besides, there is nothing against Jakob Minde, old Zernitz, or Burgomaster Guntz, all of whom are much more prominent in the novel than the rest of the councillors, and all of whom are definitely representative of the citizen class. Fontane places it beyond all doubt that these particular citizens were not all men of admirable character, and that some of them were men of an abominable character, but he does not afford satisfactory grounds for the sweeping statement quoted above. On the other hand, whereas Fontane aims at recording without judging and without partiality, he does not seem here to be absolutely successful. Certainly he offers no recriminations and apportions no praise, but he appears to incline to sympathy, if not for Valtin, at least for Grete.[1] The acceptance of such a theory would best explain the implication, which arises from time to time, that in some manner the inimical mental and temperamental atmosphere about Grete might have been rendered less injurious. But the implication is never allowed to become too obvious.

The plot is not complicated. Grete Minde, the young

[1] Which represents a romantic feeling, for straightforward human sympathy would be more freely extended to Valtin.

daughter of the old merchant, Jacob Minde, by his second wife, who was a Spaniard, even before her father's death is very unhappy, owing to the unsympathetic nature of her brother Gerdt and his wife Trud. She vents her grievances in the ear of Valtin Zernitz, a healthy and straightforward youth of her own class, who is himself somewhat irritated by the presence of a young stepmother. Trud does her best to make the girl's life difficult, and to break her rather hasty pride and her independent spirit. After her father's death, Grete succeeds in making Valtin, who, despite his cautious nature, is madly in love with her, promise to run away with her, should the worst come to the worst. The birth of a child to Trud renders things more unbearable for Grete, who does not find sufficient comfort in the words of her friend, the pastor Gigas. In a fit of passion she assaults Trud, and then flees in company with Valtin. The reader nexts finds her attached to some strolling players; Valtin is dying. In accordance with a promise at the death-bed, Grete goes back with her child to ask her brother's forgiveness. He casts her off and denies that she is possessed of any inheritance. This lie he repeats, when Grete appeals to the assembled council of the town. Grete's mind gives way. With the cunning of madness, she fires the town. Then, in the confusion that reigns, she carries off Gerdt's little son and takes him along with her own child up into the church tower, where they all perish.

Fontane makes but little use here of the foreshadowing method of adding strength to the plot. The principal matter extraneous to the plot, which, as in *Schach von*

Wuthenow, is not unwarranted in the novel as a whole, has been already touched upon in connection with the classification of the work itself. Two points, however, call for further attention. The disastrous outcome of the marionette play, which itself affords some illustration of several characters, provides Valtin with an opportunity to show the stuff of which he is made, and so to strengthen Grete's confidence in him. On the other hand, the theological and other difficulties which trouble Gigas on the occasion of the Elector's visit have certainly no rightful place in the narrative. Fontane has given way here to his fondness for dealing with the mental qualities of the clergy.

It is not to be supposed from this, however, that Fontane is guilty of neglecting the more important characters. Generally speaking, the characters belong to the wealthy citizen class; members of other classes, with the exception of the clergyman in the earlier chapters, are touched on only lightly.

The character of Grete herself is not easy to grasp, despite the apparent decisiveness she displays; this is not due to faulty drawing, but to the fact that the reader sees her almost throughout the entire length of the novel while various qualities and tendencies are struggling within her. One thing, which is fully borne out by the speech, is always present, her quick-wittedness. She speaks in short and sharp sentences, as if to carry her hearers away and thus prevent them differing from her. Moreover, her words carry weight, as she does not talk for talking's sake. It is worth while remarking that, although Fontane is himself so fond of conversation,

he is yet able to present an excellent character that does not share his liking. Grete does not attempt to disguise her weaknesses: she admits that she loves herself first, and that she cannot forgive her enemies. This very frankness causes one to consider whether she might not have been amenable to perspicacious authority; and this possibility becomes the more probable when one recalls that she defers to what she believes to be genuine and disinterested advice.[1] She does recognise that her way is not necessarily right. Despite her high spirits and hot temperament she gives life in her brother's household an honest trial, proving that she is not the slave of the mere impulse of the moment. But the sense of injustice is so highly developed in her as to make her largely indifferent to the fate of others.[2] The gift of humour, the virtue of faithfulness, the fundamental leaning to a settled existence, none of these actually desert her, till the cloud comes over her mind. The ordering of her existence must, however, lie with herself; for if she is not actively desirous of ruling others, the fixed factor in her conduct is impatience under restraint. One may say in conclusion that if it is surprising to find such a character amid such surroundings, it is equally surprising to find such a character with such a name.[3]

No other character approaches Grete in importance; yet with some of them Fontane is thoroughly successful. Valtin Zernitz is a young man with whom one would

[1] So in religious questions to that of Gigas, and in the matter of returning home to the dying Valtin.

[2] Thus strengthening her likeness to Kleist's hero, Kohlhaas.

[3] In view of the contradictions in her character, Grete can be compared with the heroes and heroines of the Young Germans.

willingly shake hands, although his speech is colourless, despite the scraps of knowledge he displays. Without any outstanding qualities, he makes no determined effort to assert his native caution, where it prompts him as to the danger of his conduct. One fancies occasionally that he rather prides himself on being so deeply in love with such a girl as Grete. In the dark days he shows himself a man, and on his death-bed far from laying the blame on Grete, as he might excusably have done, he tries to induce her to lay it on himself.

In his differentiation of the speech of Trud and Grete, Fontane gives an excellent illustration of his ability to mark character by means of the spoken word. Trud also speaks in a short and sharp manner, but whereas Grete gives the impression always of hurrying on, Trud is provocative and always throwing out challenges. A hard and selfish woman, her delight lies in domineering; not caddish enough to make occasion to break others to her will, she seizes unfailingly on every occasion that does arise. Her main endeavour is to be different from others : so she takes no part in public amusements, and is very zealous in religious observances. So, too, she dresses richly, not like Emrentz, because she likes the things, but in order to distinguish herself from the less wealthy women of her class. Although one may argue it is for the merest self-gratification, yet she is human in her desire for children. Fontane fails to make the reader clear on two important points; is she a coward and is she a liar? The answer to these questions must, on the basis of what one sees of her, remain contradictory.

Gerdt Minde, the miserly son of a liberal father, is

well handled by the novelist. His soul is in his money-bags. He is ignorant, narrow-minded, malicious when the occasion offers, but too lazy to seek occasions. Callous and sceptical, he believes that all men try to do what he is doing, except fools who do not know how to set about it. As he sits silent, one almost hears him scheming to increase his wealth.

As in *Schach von Wuthenow*, Fontane's conversational method makes a success of several minor characters. Emrentz Zernitz, Burgomaster Guntz, one or two of the players, make a living impression on the reader's mind. Nothing incongruous is attributed to them. With two of the more important minor characters, however, Fontane is not happy. One obtains no definite impression of old Jacob Minde, save that he is a man of experience, who has learnt the value of toleration. On Pastor Gigas the author expends more care, with perhaps even worse results. He desires to make Gigas, in common with all his clergymen, tolerant; but tolerance does not seem to fit the man. It is quite feasible that a clergyman, though a strict adherent to his creed, should be humanly tolerant of Grete's failings and be attracted by her; but it is very unlikely that a Lutheran, at a time when the Reformed Church was making such headway, should be so liberal in religious matters. Neither does Fontane, who would appear not properly to have envisaged this character, make it appear probable; although he does succeed in showing how Gigas got out of the difficulty of salving his conscience, without incurring the wrath of an Elector who belonged to the Reformed Church. On the whole, one must judge that

the novelist has somewhat blindly followed his desire for the inclusion of a clergyman.

The scenes vary from group scenes down to scenes in which Grete alone appears. Grete, again, almost always appears in the frequent scenes with two characters. In contrast to the opening of *Schach von Wuthenow*, the first scene presents only the two central characters. Very occasionally the effect of one scene is deliberately heightened by contrasting it with another.[1] As regards the scenes up to Valtin's death, Fontane at times purposely breaks the continuity which might naturally have been established, thus giving point to the remark that the action partakes of the nature of that of a ballad.[2] Again after Valtin's death, the figure of Grete, as in a ballad, lends a certain unity to scenes differing greatly in structure by the sheer force of interest it arouses. Some scenes are certainly conversational in the main, but a much larger proportion than is usual in Fontane's novels do not depend on what is said for their interest. Such scenes as that between Grete and Trud before the former runs away, and that between Grete and the councillors would be intelligible if acted without words. And this brings one naturally to the fact that many scenes are essentially dramatic in quality; and no one who reads *Grete Minde* will deny Fontane the power to portray incident in a vivid, but non-hyperbolical manner. Consider the economy of words in this description of the final rupture between Grete and Trud :—

[1] The best example is afforded by the contrast between the players' merry-making and Valtin's last hours.

[2] Cf. A. Stern, *Geschichte der neuern Literatur*, Vol. VII., Ch. 197, Sect. 4.

Grete had taken a step backwards, she could see nothing distinctly. Then, unconscious of what she was doing, she seized the girdle hanging over the end of the cradle and hurled it at her sister-in-law's hated face. Crying out with pain, Trud staggered and supported herself with difficulty on a small table behind her. Grete saw now that the sharp corners of the long silver pendant must have injured Trud's forehead or temple badly, for the blood was running down her left cheek. Yet she did not shudder at the sight, and was filled only with the doubly happy feeling of having satisfied her hatred and won her freedom. Yes, freedom! She had finished with this house. She was firmly resolved that she could stay no longer. Away, at once! And she flew down the stairs, across the hall and courtyard into the garden.—XIII., 391–2.

The general setting is provided by the town and neighbourhood of Tangermünde at the beginning of the seventeenth century. Outdoor and indoor settings find equal favour. They vary from the sitting-room to the church, from the garden to the open road. As is usual with Fontane, some of the settings are much more detailed than others; this is most noticeable here with regard to the various rooms in which scenes take place. Thus the novelist would appear to be attempting to strengthen the character of Gigas by the description of his study, which is much more circumstancial than is usually the case with his descriptions of clergymen's studies. The beautiful settings provided by the old castle, and the half-ruined convent are tinged with romanticism; and the same comment may be applied to the prevalence of night shades. The vivid setting for the final catastrophe, a belfry wrapped in flames, is quite unusual in Fontane.[1]

[1] Reference should be made, however, to the setting of the burning tower in *Unwiederbringlich*.

On a cursory examination, one might incline to think that the novelist had sometimes given way too greatly to his love of conversation; but a closer examination will show that the concentrated action quite holds its own. Reflection and description are fully adequate; and reported action does not exceed its rightful limits. The touch of humour introduced mainly through Grete herself is sufficient to keep the novel human in character. It will thus be seen that the proportion of *Grete Minde* wellnigh rivals in excellence that of *Schach von Wuthenow*.

Ellernklipp is connected inwardly with *Grete Minde* inasmuch as it essays to portray in Hilde another human born to unhappiness. The portrait is well presented and supported; and one feels that Hilde is actually unable to attain to happiness, even should the opportunity offer.[1] One recalls her indifference as a child to the death of her mother; and one is doubtful of the depth of her affection for Martin, when she actually marries his father. As she seems unable to experience genuine sorrow, so it seems improbable that she could have realised pure joy. In the attempt to show that all guilt must be expiated in this life Fontane is not successful. Baltzer, a man who can murder his son in order to marry his sweetheart, sees no fate hanging over him; neither does the reader. And this despite the uncanniness of Melcher Harms. When the trap breaks down and one becomes aware of the impending catastrophe, one feels that it is too unprepared. Fontane is to some extent driven out of his usual paths in his endeavour to describe

[1] In this she differs from Grete and from Lehnert Menz in *Quitt*.

the power which passion can obtain over a man. One must believe that despite a genuine struggle Baltzer is unable to free himself from this power. By well judged touches Fontane suggests the atmosphere in the house. Although acting within his rights, Baltzer cannot take lightly the shooting of the poacher; therefore only some demoniac force could have driven him to the foul murder of his son.

The plot is straightforward. Hilde, a child over whom hangs a cloud—rather thin—of mystery, and who is really the child of a young nobleman and a woman of the people, is adopted at her mother's death, at the suggestion of the village parson, by Baltzer Bocholt, gamekeeper to the family of Hilde's father. Baltzer's wife is dead, and he has a small boy, Martin. As she grows older, Hilde shows more strongly points in character and temperament which distinguish her from the ordinary village girl. She is friendly with the parson, as also with an old leader of the conventiclers. Martin comes to love Hilde, who appears to return his affection. Baltzer sees his adopted daughter one day asleep in the open; his sensual passions are at once aroused. He struggles against them, but in the midst of his struggle he overhears Martin and Hilde arranging a rendezvous. His thoughts immediately turn to violence. Purposely meeting his son on the precipitous height known as Ellernklipp, he attacks him and throws him over the edge. Afterwards he induces Hilde to marry him, but no happiness comes of the marriage. A child is born, but with no strength to live. Hilde finally induces Baltzer to go with her to the neighbouring town to

consult the doctor about the child; the doctor declares that the child cannot live. On the return journey the trap breaks down. Coming round the Ellernklipp on foot is too great a strain on Baltzer's nerves. He shoots himself at the very spot where his son had been murdered. The same night the child dies. Hilde falls into silent misery, and although her spirits revive for a short time, she, too, quickly descends to the grave.[1] Somewhat more is made of the foreshadowing method of strengthening the plot than in *Grete Minde*. There is in the beginning the obvious symbolism of the capsizing of the *Martin*, when the children sail their boats; and further the settled gloomy outlook of Melcher Harms on the future of Martin and Hilde.

The paucity of extraneous matter shows that *Ellernklipp* nearly approaches the *Novelle*; yet there is a sufficiency of such matter to break the unity of action or of mood. It finds its way in mainly through Fontane's liking for differing types, and his self-indulgence as regards anecdotes. Quite extraneous would appear to be the stories of Henry of Brunswick told to Hilde by Melcher Harms.[2] The introduction of the old general and the young officers at the castle is quite uncalled for, and may have arisen from Fontane's desire to introduce a group which his story had not actually allowed. Again, Baltzer's adventures at the fair at Ilseburg are not absolutely essential to the concluding passages, but

[1] The fact that the murder and the suicide are both committed at the same place shows that the construction of the plot was influenced by the exponents of the *Schicksalstragödie*.

[2] If they are designed to strengthen the atmosphere in which the characters of the novel are moving, they fail of their object.

they provide scraps of general conversation which Fontane, as a novelist, could not resist.

The characters are drawn from men and women of varying ages, for the author can hardly be said definitely to portray Hilde and Martin as mere children. As in *Grete Minde* the main characters are taken from the middle class, but serving people are prominent in a way unknown in the other novel. One can see here how Fontane avoids any attempt to describe the life of the labouring class; the life of the poor wood-cutter, Rochussen, is merely hinted at. Strictly speaking, perhaps, there is nothing very uncommon in such people as Hilde and Melcher Harms; yet one feels there must have been a certain Romantic influence at work upon Fontane, when he elaborated these characters.

Baltzer Bocholt, whose family resemblance to Opitz in *Quitt* should be noted, is a man strong in body and apparently also in mind, to whom Fontane in a material way has not been unkind. The key to his character is to be found in his self-conceit, which is of a high order. His name seems to have been chosen with an eye to the illustration of this fundamental characteristic. One cannot picture behind such a name a modest and retiring individual. Baltzer does his duty, not out of pure devotion to duty, but because he believes that the non-fulfilment of his duty would affect his prestige. He is not definitely hard-hearted, let alone malicious or cruel, but he likes to impose restrictions upon others. For this reason, and also because he dislikes unbending in his own home, he creates an atmosphere of distrust. But if Baltzer is a man living exclusively for his own sake, he

has not the strength of mind to bear the consequences of indifference to the fate of others. It is thus that the murder of Martin slowly but surely comes to be expiated. The excellence of the character drawing is not diminished by the spoken word. Baltzer, in order to give himself an air, is fond of omitting the direct 'I' and using 'shall' and 'must' in an impersonal manner, although it is absolutely obvious that 'I' is what stands behind the veil of impersonality. This mannerism, which is the more patent in contrast to the plain manner in which he speaks on occasion to Grissel, is thoroughly in keeping with the element of self-deception which his character displays.

Hilde is a character with which Fontane is not so successful as with Baltzer. This is not entirely due to the fact that the author is required to give an impression of a somewhat uncertain personality; for it is obvious that he did not himself realise the inward life of Hilde to the extent that he realised that of Grete Minde. Yet the character should not be set down as a failure. Hilde lives in an atmosphere which she is continually creating for herself, an atmosphere which in the uncertainty of its composition the reader finds somewhat uninteresting. The reader comprehends that Hilde herself cannot define that after which her soul yearns. Melcher Harms brings it nearer to her, and so, as Grissel observes, she is a different being when she is going to talk to the old man, holding herself erect and walking with an elastic step. In the changes that come over her she is a sister of Cécile in the novel of that name. From the beginning dreaming and hoping for something beyond her grasp, Hilde is

hardly a sympathetic character; one does not shed many tears over her grave. One may take her room as the symbol of the life in which she is actually placed: she has no real joy in the room itself, but is for ever looking out of the window. In the listlessness that leaves her so seldom lies her chief chance, it would seem, of gaining some happiness; for it may come to her of itself. Yet in the end she who is so passive attains to no more happiness than Lehnert Menz in *Quitt*. Lehnert Menz, who struggles to bring it to himself. Hilde, despite her dreaming, never acts for effect; and similarly when she displays emotion her language is free from hyperbole and undue emphasis. Throughout she speaks little, though she can speak well. Again, she is intelligent, but scarcely benefits thereby; has a will of her own, and rarely makes use of it. So she does all things, only in part: loves Martin only in part, because her heart is not really with him, not certainly through the least desire to injure or mock him; consents to marriage with Baltzer, because she has come to believe that even in a material way her dreams cannot come true, and so she is willing to realise something of them even in a crude fashion. She is not a true idealist, cannot live wholly on what might be.

As the name almost suggests, Fontane gives in Melcher Harms a portrait of an individual who has peculiarities. Melcher is a conventicler, somewhat self-righteous, but fundamentally convinced of the vanity of human wisdom. Neither kindly nor unkindly, he tries to regard himself and others in an objective manner. One suspects that he considers his own ignorance less dense than that of

others, not on account of arrogance, but on account of his quiet assurance. From this calmness springs his ability to read character; and from this ability to read character proceeds his foresight, or foreknowledge. Fontane ably emphasises the fundamental points in his character through his speech; this shows him fond of considering possibilities, conscious of something inscrutable to man, and yet it has at times a colouring of something removed from doubt.[1]

Amongst the subsidiary characters, Martin, who is in some ways another Valtin Zernitz, is strangely lacking in life. On the other hand, there are some of those excellent suggestions in the way of character which Fontane rarely fails to include: Dr Schliephake, the cautious but downright physician; the old General who is also a conventicler. In the nature of an offset to the other characters are those speaking Low German, Baltzer's servants, Grissel and Joost. It is interesting to note in the speech of Grissel, by far the more important of the two, that where Fontane is engaged in reproducing dialect he does not at the same time succeed in giving, through the speech, much indication of character. Otherwise Grissel is an admirable sketch of a housekeeper: self-important, but fond of gossip; conducting the establishment well, and continually aiming at ruling it; without actual vice, and without genuine affection. In concluding the survey of the characters, one comes to Pastor Sörgel, who is a humane, comfort-loving old man who likes to see people at peace; he has simple joys, and

[1] Attention might be drawn in this connection to his fairly frequent use of *gewiss*.

an aversion to difficulties. Yet he does his duty in talking to those committed to his charge for their own good. Although he does not seek his own glorification, he likes to have his opinion respected, and remains rather proud of his useless Old Testament knowledge.

In connection with the scenes, it must be observed that those with two characters are frequent, those with one not altogether rare, while Fontane has obviously been at trouble to insert an occasional group scene. His attraction to this latter type of scene would appear to be as constant as his avoidance of scenes with three characters. The surface connection between the scenes is often destroyed by the interval that occurs between them, although the same characters may be re-introduced. Scenes in which the conversation is the all-important thing are more common than in *Grete Minde*;[1] while on the whole the scenes may be described as more significant than dramatic. Dramatic, however, is the device of maintaining two scenes simultaneously, as is done when Baltzer in his room listens to Martin and Hilde talking of their love. Yet Fontane does not make full use of his opportunities for producing tension in the minds of the readers, as may be seen from the fact that though he describes the murder, he does not actually present the suicide. This manner of dealing with the catastrophe is more in agreement with his general practice.

Broadly speaking, the setting is in and about the village of Emmerode in the Harz, in the second half of

[1] Scenes between Baltzer and Grissel, or Grissel and Joost, are always of purely conversational interest.

the eighteenth century. Of the incidental settings the outdoor are more frequent than the indoor, although interiors are by no means excluded. One may say of them that they are never complete, and mostly only suggested. Fontane follows no rule but his own caprice. If Hilde's room is given with some fullness, Sörgel's study, where several scenes take place, is left quite indefinite. As always in Fontane, there is no genuine attempt to give the setting for the chief social scene.[1] While the setting of the murder scene is given in the briefest fashion :—

> On the right the cliff, on the left the precipice. And on the edge of the precipice only a bramble and a few stones. —XII., 539.

Ellernklipp is disproportionate in two ways which detract from its value. In the first place, there is not sufficient reflection to counterbalance the speech. Practically, the reflection is confined to Baltzer; but as Fontane tells the story there ought to be more reflection on the part of Baltzer, and some on the part of Hilde, at least. Again, the proportion of comedy to tragedy is not well maintained. Having, as has been seen, made out of a possible *Novelle* a novel, Fontane should have paid more attention to this question. The semi-humorous conversations between Grissel and Joost are neither weighty nor diverting enough. Possibly it would have been wise to develop the wit of the young officers who appear on two occasions.

[1] Baltzer's birthday party in Ch. IX.

Unterm Birnbaum is in many ways related to *Ellernklipp*. It is in the main a powerful exposition of the old saw, 'Murder will out.' Fontane succeeds in making the reader realise the truth of these familiar words. The necessary atmosphere is obtained chiefly by the portrayal of Hradscheck's desperate struggles to keep countenance under difficulties: as when Ede finds a button from the murdered man's coat, or when Buggenhagen suggests excavating the cellar rather than vaulting the roof. To this must be added the skilful use of Mother Jeschke, who is always throwing out dark hints from which the reader draws the inference that a little more hatred or a little more energy on her part might seal Hradscheck's fate. Indeed, the building of another story on to his house may be regarded as a symbol of Hradscheck's inability to get away from his guilt—for the cellar still remains at the bottom however high he goes. Again, Fontane shows through Hradscheck, as through Lehnert Menz in *Quitt*, that once Fortune has set her face against a man, no effort, however skilful, and no effrontery, however desperate, can move her to change her attitude. One feels how absurdly useless is Hradscheck's gambling and lottery prize hunting; one recognises that, despite his assumption of joviality after his wife's death, he is conscious that he cannot force the grace of Fortune. For one thing, the change in his manner is too sudden and pronounced to be anything but artificial. Fontane contrives to leave another point very debatable, and that whether the conscience may be altogether deadened. Although one does not conceive how Hradscheck could ever properly have enjoyed the

fruits of his crime, one must admit that his mental distress appears to proceed very much more from the fear of detection, than from the voice of conscience. It is not possible, it would rightly appear, to get to the bottom of every character.

Taking into consideration the suggestions that the novelist continually throws out, the plot is not complicated; while it is undoubtedly arresting and faultlessly constructed. Abel Hradscheck, keeper of the inn and store in a village of the *Oderbruch*, is in pecuniary difficulties. The approaching visit of the representative of a wine firm to demand payment for stock he has received at first makes him more than ordinarily desperate, then seems to furnish him with the idea of a way out. He contrives to scrape together enough money to pay the representative in the presence of witnesses. The traveller, who is to start early in the morning, is late in getting up, and the ostler thinks him strangely silent. He drives away. Later his horse and trap are found in the river, but no body is recovered. Suspicion as to Hradscheck gaining in strength, the inn-keeper is arrested, but nothing can be proved. The villagers think that he ought to be set at liberty. But the village constable, who hates him, learns from an old woman that she saw Hradscheck on the night in question in his garden with a bulky object beside him, and that he dug for some time before going into the house. By order of the judge of the district Hradscheck is brought to the garden, where under a pear-tree the body of a French soldier is found, a body which must have lain there for years. Hradscheck then explains to the judge that on the night

in question he had gone into his garden to bury some rancid bacon, because he wished to avoid his wife's reproaches, and because bad bacon would bring his shop into ill repute. When he came upon the body under the pear-tree he was afraid and returned to the house. In the early morning he buried the bacon elsewhere. The bacon having been found in the place he mentions, the suspect is released. His wife, however, pines away. Hradscheck pays frequent visits to Berlin, contemplates a second marriage, and becomes exceedingly popular. But the occasional insinuations of the old hag, and the finding of a button such as the traveller had had on his coat, trouble him. He descends one night into the cellar, and in the morning is found there dead. The head and arms of another body are showing above the ground.

The success of Hradscheck's plan lies in his being aware of the soldier's body under the pear-tree—the reader is allowed to see him discover it—and then in the skill with which he induces the villagers to believe that his wife has received a legacy which can account for the marked increase in their resources. It is to be remarked that it is not established that Hradscheck's wife played the part of the traveller and drove the horse and trap into the river, but hints as to the course of the action are offered from the beginning. So in the first chapter Hradscheck reflects on the possibility of being sold up, in the second he is obviously brooding over murder though the reader does not know of whom, in the third his wife has agreed to something of great importance, which she at first refused. In the thirteenth chapter Hradscheck practically admits his guilt. The skill

exhibited in the management of the plot lies not actually in deceiving the reader, for only a dull or careless reader would be deceived, but in displaying the qualities of Hradscheck's plan at their best, as they deceived the villagers, the clergyman, and even the police authorities. Fontane brings the reader, despite the enlightenment he receives, to share all their doubts and to agree with their final dismissal of the murder charge.

The question of the extraneous matter, as not infrequently in Fontane, demands the most careful consideration. Much that is not strictly required in a bare outline will be found ultimately to be quite in place. So the introduction of the villagers serves to acquaint the reader with the type of man whom Hradscheck has daily to deceive, as also to provide for a running commentary on events. Even the fleeting glimpse of the village women, apart from Mutter Jeschke and her niece, serves a definite purpose in bringing the reader to realise how improbable would be the connecting of Frau Hradscheck with a serious crime, even by people not very well disposed towards her. It may be true that somewhat too much is made of the pastor, but his presence, and this same knowledge of his character, is necessary to the plot. It is he who is chiefly instrumental in reinstating Hradscheck in the good graces of the village; as Hradscheck points out in the beginning to his wife, the goodwill of the pastor is worth winning.[1] Ultimately, one recognises that the purely extraneous matter, although it exists, is of very restricted

[1] In *Quitt*, the parson preaches a sermon not in favour of, but against, the hero.

dimensions. The stories told by Szulski with regard to the Polish insurrection are uncalled for, as also, in so expansive a manner, are Hradscheck's anecdotes towards the end. Moreover, the outline sketch of the young woman whom Hradscheck proposes to marry, and the disquisitions on the *Vollblut-Berlinerin*, are unnecessary. An excellent example of Fontane's historical anecdote is worth recording.

> Constantine wished to annoy the Poles, because they had said that the Russians ate nothing but tallow. So one day, having invited eleven Poles, he had eleven tallow candles handed round for dessert. There was a twelfth of marzipan, naturally for himself. Of course, on the strength of being a Grand Duke and a Viceroy, he always helped himself first. But this time he took the wrong one and had to get it down.—V., 339–40.

In Abel Hradscheck, whose name indicates that he cannot be the same as the usual inhabitants of the district, Fontane has succeeded in presenting an excellent character, without resorting to a heavy brush. Hradscheck is a man who loves life, but not the struggle it entails. He is not altogether selfish, nor is he a bully, or of particularly low tastes. He likes a joke, a game, good company, and is determined at all costs to maintain himself in a position to enjoy them. As for Schach, so for him, life is worth while after but one fashion. Thus he becomes without compunction. A clever brain and an innate capacity for acting make him the very man to take advantage of the circumstances which arise. This capacity for acting may be readily appreciated through

his speech. He shows assurance, but not pretentiousness in his choice of words; he is quick to avoid unpleasantness; and, most important of all, he is conclusive in his manner, never hammering at any subject long enough to arouse the suspicion that he is particularly anxious about it.

The other characters, amongst whom males predominate, belong to the middle and serving classes. It is worth noting that the aristocracy is not represented, something very unusual in Fontane. They form in a manner rather too conscious a varied company.

On a smaller scale, but on the same sparing lines as in the case of her husband, Fontane achieves a certain success with Frau Hradscheck. Yet he fails to make her speech sufficiently distinct from that of her husband. As she herself admits, she has but one fixed principle in life, not to be poor. Preserving a little attachment to her husband, she is vain, hypocritical, and without depth of feeling. With sufficient nerve to be an accomplice in the crime, she yet breaks down under the ensuing mental strain. It is noticeable that in the end she comes back to the Catholic faith of her childhood, as does Cécile in the novel of that name.

In Mother Jeschke, Fontane presents a compelling sketch of a local variety of a far-spread type. She is an old hag, of the kind that the men of the Middle Ages would have called a witch, and on whom the men of the nineteenth century look not without a certain superstition. Sure of her views, she is unmoved by other opinions. An object of suspicion to all, she repays herself by entertaining ill-will towards every one; but she is too

cautious to proclaim her ill-will openly and directly.[1] In her case the novelist correctly makes use of Low German dialect.

Of the village coterie Kunicke the cheery, open-handed and stout-hearted, and Mietzel his opposite, are well hit off; whereas Quaas, the miller, without being an actual failure, is a little laboured. Amongst the other subsidiary characters, the least successful is the village magistrate, Woytasch, in whom one can distinguish nothing individual. The language of the subsidiary characters is well managed, never approaching the improbable. In Pastor Eccelius, Fontane gives another sketch of the clergyman who is more of an official than a shepherd of the flock. Eccelius dislikes the emotional, but is determined to maintain a position of authority in the village. In common with so many of Fontane's clergy, he is not above the joys of the table. It would seem to argue a certain hesitancy on the part of the author that his speech is so frequently reported, rather than directly recorded.

One is struck in *Unterm Birnbaum* by the fact that a number of the scenes are not played out in full. In some of these the actual complement of characters is not ascertainable. In contrast to the group scenes stand those in which Hradscheck appears alone; the monologues, generally of a foreshadowing nature, are always short. The scenes very rarely pass directly one into another; often considerable intervals elapse between

[1] Her mouth, accordingly, is sometimes shut through policy, where Melcher Harms, in *Ellernklipp*, keeps silence because of an unwillingness to interfere.

them, as between those of the other novels considered in this chapter. Hradscheck remains the chief connecting link throughout. It must be remarked that although the plot is founded on a deed of violence, there are, and here *Unterm Birnbaum* differs from *Grete Minde* and *Ellernklipp*, no scenes of violence.

All settings, fully given, fall within the village of Tschechin in the *Oderbruch*; more particularly they centre round the inn. The inn garden is by far the most important outdoor setting, interiors being more common. The settings are as a rule not detailed; and details where given are more significant than complete.[1] It is interesting to note that the church interior is not described; Fontane is often negligent in this respect. Even Mother Jeschke's cottage, an important setting, remains indefinite. The author would appear to be relying very much more on atmosphere than on precise settings. In this connection exception must be taken to the assertion of R. M. Meyer [2] that 'a fixed place excites to murder and expiation, as in Annette von Droste's *Judenbuche*.' As has been seen, the assertion holds of *Ellernklipp*. Here, however, the pear-tree, or rather the dead man beneath it, suggests the actual procedure in a crime, possibly previously conceived in a hazy fashion; the murder itself takes place in the bedroom, the body is disposed of, and Hradscheck dies in the cellar. It will be seen that this does not coincide with the run of events

[1] Cf. the description of the Hradschecks' living-room (I., 308–9) with that of Frau von Carayon's favourite room in *Schach von Wuthenow*.

[2] In *Die Deutsche Literatur des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts*.

in the *Judenbuche*, where the bodies of the victim and of the expiator both hang from the same tree.

Little fault can be found with the proportion of *Unterm Birnbaum*. If one is tempted to think that there might be more reflection, one must remember how high Hradscheck stands in importance above the other characters. Then the reflection will appear fully adequate. The proportion of comedy to tragedy is better maintained than in *Ellernklipp* or in *Quitt*, for Fontane furnishes himself from the beginning with a sufficiency of figures entailing ideas of comedy. The author also displays considerable skill in maintaining the proportion between the part of the mystery which is exposed to the part which is not exposed. In this manner, while preventing the novel from becoming crude, he avoids all puerile mystification.

Unterm Birnbaum, *Ellernklipp*, and *Grete Minde* may all be distinguished from Fontane's other novels by the degree to which incident is made to reveal character. The consideration of the plots as given is sufficient to corroborate this statement; but minor incidents are employed with equal skill. This use of minor incidents, which has already been noted in *Vor dem Sturm* and *Schach von Wuthenow*, and which recurs in later works, can thus be regarded as a settled feature of Fontane's narrative manner. It will be seen that it corresponds to his love of the anecdotal in history. Whereas in all three novels the author's own remarks are of scant importance, the remarks which the characters make on one another can never be overlooked. They are of somewhat less value in *Grete Minde*, however, than in the

other two novels. Direct psychological analysis is in every case restricted to the central figure, but its employment is always effective.

The three titles are well chosen: as two indicate places which are absolutely essential to the plot, the third gives, in the absence of any such place, the name of the character around whom everything centres. The chapters in *Unterm Birnbaum* are merely numbered, but those in *Grete Minde* and *Ellernklipp* have headings which point directly to the chief content. In all three novels they maintain, on the whole, an average length; occasionally there are striking variations from the average.[1] Only in *Grete Minde* does one remark chapters following directly on the preceding one. Although the chapters, especially in *Grete Minde*, sometimes correspond to single scenes, they do not have tense endings, in the manner of the serial story. As a rule the endings, very often in the form of dialogue, are prospective or retrospective. On the other hand, chapters which markedly fall away in the manner already noted in *Schach von Wuthenow* are not wanting.[2] Subdivision of chapters by means of asterisks occurs in the three novels, being least common in *Grete Minde*. Asterisks are not employed to mark a new atmosphere in the same scene or the entrance of a new character creating a new situation. The divisions so created differ in no respect from chapters.

[1] Thus, Ch. VII. of *Unterm Birnbaum* is extremely short, while Ch. XV. of *Grete Minde* is greatly above the average.

[2] For excellent examples see *Grete Minde*, Ch. I., *Unterm Birnbaum*, Chap. IV.

As is usual with Fontane, letters are of importance in *Unterm Birnbaum,* more especially those which pass between Pastor Eccelius and Justice Vowinkel, and deal with the history and character of the Hradschecks. In *Ellernklipp* and *Grete Minde,* on the other hand, Fontane dispenses with the assistance of the letter. No use is made of diaries, but the conclusion of *Unterm Birnbaum* is given in the form of an extract from the parish register. Verse of varying kinds and varying value is found in all three novels; but *Grete Minde* is much the richest in this respect. Scraps of humorous verse are not wanting, but the most interesting are the stanzas of Julius Mosen's *Die letzten Zehn vom vierten Regiment* in *Unterm Birnbaum,*[1] and the portions from older poems given in *Grete Minde.*[2] There is no direct interposition on the part of the author, but Fontane has been unable in each case wholly to resist the temptation of taking the reader into his confidence. These instances seem to indicate that he uses 'our' in reference to characters he wishes to treat with good-humoured contempt.[3]

In general effect the style in *Grete Minde* and *Unterm Birnbaum* is superior to that in *Ellernklipp.* Whereas in the two first books it is admirably adapted to the

[1] Ch. V., 340.

[2] So: *Habt Ihr es nicht vernommen? Der Lenz ist angekommen.*—Ch. VI., 355. *Der liebste Buhle, den ich hab'—Der liegt beim Wirt im Keller.*—Ch. XV., 409. *Es waren zwei Königskinder.*—Ch. IX., 371. In connection with this last it must be remarked that the peasant girls singing this ballad would have employed not a High German, but a Low German version.

[3] So particularly of the good-for-nothing son of the schoolmaster in *Unterm Birnbaum,* Ch. IX., 353.

nature of the narrative, it is marred in the third by frequent artificialities. One remarks at times in reading *Ellernklipp* a conscious choice of words; and it has to be conceded that in places these words achieve a picturesqueness generally unknown in Fontane's prose. In the use of short, often verbless sentences of a compelling nature, the author is too unrestrained in *Ellernklipp*, with the result that he destroys the effect he desires to produce. In *Grete Minde* and *Unterm Birnbaum*, however, he is exceedingly convincing, without undue emphasis or tasteless adornment. Each of the novels shows a complete absence of extravagant language. Whereas in *Ellernklipp* the use of dialect is frequent enough to allow of its being judged on its own merits, the dialect in *Unterm Birnbaum*, and even more exactly in *Grete Minde*, may be described as agreeably colouring the style.[1] *Grete Minde* does not gain anything by the occasional employment of archaic forms which occur in description, quite without system.[2] The number of foreign words to be found in the three novels is not large; indeed, save in *Unterm Birnbaum*, which shows a stray English word, the borrowings are limited to a modest list from French and Latin.[3] Foreign tags are almost entirely wanting, Fontane having restrained his liking for such in order the better to adapt his style to the nature of the material. On the other hand, particularly in *Grete Minde*, he too frequently employs phrases

[1] Dialect is not used in the little that is said by the old nurse Regine, in *Grete Minde*. Fontane is at fault in this.

[2] Easily noticed are: *weilen, obwohlen.*

[3] It should be noted that the Latin always at least equal the French, a position of affairs not common in Fontane.

designed to keep the narrative running smoothly;[1] from the same cause arises the over-use of 'and' at the beginning of sentences; in the same connection may be mentioned his trick of splitting up one sentence into distinct units. In this attempt to avoid all appearance of long periods, he seems at times to go too far. The following example may be considered :—

> They spoke but little. Finally Grete said, 'Where are we going?'
>
> 'Into Luneburg, I think. And then farther on to Lubeck. I have connections there.'—*Grete Minde*, XIII., 397.

In keeping with that certain artificiality that has been noted in the style of *Ellernklipp* is the somewhat extravagant use of the exclamation mark, and of dots to indicate that a sentence, almost always in conversation, is left unfinished. More moderately employed, the unfinished sentence is a source of strength in *Unterm Birnbaum*. In these three, as in his other novels, the author sometimes condescends to direct the reader's attention to a word of particular importance by having it spaced out. Rhetorical questions are common in *Ellernklipp* and *Unterm Birnbaum*, where they serve at given points to maintain a sense of doubt or hesitation. The following not only exemplifies this rhetorical usage, but is also in other ways illustrative of Fontane's narrative style :— [2]

[1] Very obvious are : *und wirklich*; *allem Anschein nach*.

[2] A passage from the reflections of Baltzer Bocholt, after the murder of his son.

Yet he was fully conscious of the part he was playing to himself and said, as he gazed steadily into the mirror, 'Why, I am just like a drunken man clutching the table in order to make himself and others believe he has not lost his balance—— And have I lost it?' he continued, after a time. 'Is this not the mirror? And is this not my reflection? And do I not look the same as usual?—— Or almost. Indeed, I have looked worse before this.'— *Ellernklipp*, XII., 541.

The rhetorical question is rightly only sparsely represented in *Grete Minde*, where the whole tone is more assertive. The use of parenthesis, whereby to introduce passing comment, is slight in all three novels. In contrast to *Unterm Birnbaum*, both *Ellernklipp* and *Grete Minde* are not wholly wanting in what must be termed poetic fancy.

Despite the fact that the actual story is of much more importance in these three novels than is usually the case with Fontane, the men and women who appear in the story never cease, in themselves, to be an object of interest to the author. He deals more with men than with women; but offers a further striking departure from his general custom by practically excluding representatives of the aristocracy. One may see from the sketch of Hilde and Martin in the earlier years that Fontane is not unqualified to give an accurate impression of children, even if he is unwilling to allow them to occupy much room.[1] Speaking generally, but little is made of animate nature. In the opening chapters of

[1] It is possible that Fontane owes part of this success to introducing his children under very definite conditions, as at play, or in the confirmation class.

Grete Minde, however, something is made of the song-birds; while *Ellernklipp* is remarkable in containing a cat, an animal which does not often attract Fontane's attention. More particularly because only passing reference is made to dogs, it should be noticed that the old nun's dog in *Grete Minde* approves of Grete.[1] That this should be brought in where so much is left out is a direct indication of the novelist's belief in the dog as a judge of character.[2] Even in *Unterm Birnbaum*, and much more so in *Ellernklipp* and *Grete Minde*, Fontane talks of flowers, sometimes almost with a touch of enthusiasm. Hills, especially wooded hills, also appeal to him. Yet, even where many scenes have outdoor settings, the face of nature cannot truthfully be said to have been the subject of much consideration. It would seem that to Fontane the suggestion of the open air was the all-important matter. Outside the description of the marionette theatre, and the little on the laughing life of the strolling players, almost all the subject-matter not yet accounted for may be classed as religious, or at least as ecclesiastical. Here the novelist is discursive, making no real attempt at coming to a settled point of view; nor does he ever write in a religious tone.

Certain aspects of *Unterm Birnbaum* have a superficial relationship to the author's personal history. He was himself acquainted with a rich village in the *Oderbruch*, where his father was the chemist. Further, Hradscheck in his love of gambling corresponds to

[1] Ch XVI.

[2] Cf. Uncas and Lehnert in *Quitt*, Boncœur and Cécile in *Cécile*.

Fontane's father, while Frau Hradscheck, in her desire to dazzle the natives with the furnishings of her house, manifests the same weakness as Fontane attributes in *Meine Kinderjahre* to his mother.

As in *Schach von Wuthenow*, so in these three novels there appears a distinct leaning to a type of fatalism, which remains without harshness or bitterness. Yet Fontane is in love with life itself, and interested in all its manifestations; but as always he considers the exposition of life its best criticism. He does not take sides, but stands prepared to see and hear all things without prejudice. It is not for men to pass judgment on the deeds other men may commit. This belief stands out boldly in the manner of his narration. But he has stated very frankly through the mouth of Dr Schliephake in *Ellernklipp* his reason for refusing to dogmatise:—

'But believe me, Baltzer Bocholt, our strength is as nothing, and we are no better off here than in our knowledge. Everything is patchwork and nothing more.'—XVI., 568.

In *Ellernklipp* he admits, in contrast to his usual attitude, the immense power which passion may obtain over a man. This admission does not induce him to be less dispassionate himself, but it makes him more sentimental than is his wont. Thus he connects, in a manner reminiscent of the Romantics, nature with human actions and moods to an extent which is not later approached save in *Stine*. So when Hilde looks into Martin's room after the murder:—

The door of Martin's room was standing wide open, and she saw the full moon shining in at the window, larger and

more earnest than usual, as if it were looking for some one. Or as if it wanted to say something.—XIII., 544.

Although Fontane may remain averse to taking life with the utmost seriousness, even in these novels where its dark sides predominate, yet he is unwilling to treat it as a farce. One feels, accordingly, in *Grete Minde* that he dislikes the travesty of the emotions as manifested in the marriages of Trud and Emrentz. From these novels, finally, one would incline to suppose that although Fontane is not inimical to the church, yet he has little faith in the result of its ministrations and some suspicion as to the honesty of the motives of certain of its ministers.

In summing up, one would place *Ellernklipp*, on account of certain disproportions in its construction and of a certain artificiality of manner, below *Grete Minde* and *Unterm Birnbaum*. Everything considered, *Grete Minde* is the better of the latter two, but in the mere construction and management of the plot *Unterm Birnbaum* takes first place in Fontane's fiction.

CHAPTER IV

The New World: *Quitt*

While *Quitt* is undoubtedly one of Fontane's weaker productions, it demands a place by itself on account of the fresh settings which the novelist introduces. It is to some extent connected with the three novels considered in the last chapter, inasmuch as it deals with the planning, execution, and effects of a crime. Yet it cannot be regarded as coming under the influence of the criminal story-writers to such a degree as *Unterm Birnbaum*. As will be seen, the construction in itself is sufficient to show that Fontane was actually attempting something along different lines. Again, the transference of the action of the novel to America causes one to recall another class of writer to whom Fontane may be somewhat indebted. Little known America afforded a stage for bringing together groups of widely dissimilar people, and of illustrating their characters by means of narratives. This had been done well by the German or rather Austrian-American, Karl Postl, writing as Charles Sealsfield. The second half of *Quitt* follows this method, but only in the most obvious way. In the creation of the proper atmosphere, in the suggestion of local colour, in all those little touches which contrive to carry the reader to a strange land, Fontane does not excel. Matters and

manners differing so greatly from those to which he was accustomed do not come to natural and genuine life in his pages; from such a writer as Postl he was unable to extract the warm vitality which covered many defects in construction. In many ways, but not exclusively, *Quitt* bears the marks of an experiment; it remains an experiment which the author was wise in not following up.

In *Quitt*, Fontane again seeks to show that certain people cannot attain to actual happiness, and in conjunction with this, that every crime is expiated in this life. In the last instance, death itself will intervene to blast the happiness that seems to be within reach. Such people do best to be thankful for the least light amid their gloom. They doom themselves to a worse fate if they struggle for more; their philosophy must be that of L'Hermite, as expressed to Lehnert Menz :—

'The world is ordered in a strange fashion, and people like ourselves—pardon, I say like ourselves deliberately—are dragged by Fate, the great Juggernaut, under the wheels of his car and crushed, if they seek to be happier than they may be.'—XXXII., 275.

The reader is brought to recognise that there can be no lasting happiness for Lehnert Menz. In Germany it is greatly the condition of affairs and other people's ideas of what he should do which are against him; everything seems to conspire to bring out the worst in him. In America, on the other hand, it is obvious that Lehnert is living for the most part an artificial existence, an existence which he has neither the courage, nor the

determination to attempt to make more real. This state of indecision is connected with memories of the past from which he can never permanently escape. Yet Fontane is not happy in illustrating the inevitable expiation of the murder of Opitz. The ending is too forced. It is poetic justice, perhaps, that Lehnert should die in the same manner as Opitz, but it does not seem real. Moreover, despite Lehnert's dying letter, there is no proper atmosphere for the idea of retribution. If one can regard L'Hermite as a man who can never know real happiness, one cannot, despite his occasional night fears, feel that retribution will come upon him. Seeking to show a fundamental similarity, in the face of apparent differences, between Lehnert and L'Hermite, Fontane does not succeed; and thereby he makes the requisite atmosphere for the expiation of Lehnert's crime impossible of achievement.

Without coming directly to the point, Fontane certainly desires the reader to carry away the impression that Germany is a better country than America, despite the latter's boasted liberty. Yet, although Obadja's two sons return to Prussia, and although he himself says much in favour of the older country,[1] it cannot be said that Fontane brings the reader to accept his point of view. His failure is due in part, no doubt, to the fact that the idea of forcing his opinions upon the reader is in opposition to the unprejudiced and impartial attitude which he feels it his duty and pleasure to maintain.

With an assortment of characters more peculiar than those with whom he usually deals, Fontane desires

[1] Cf. especially his conversation with Lehnert in Ch. XVI.

further to illustrate through these characters the underlying connections which bridge the apparent gulfs existent throughout human society. People should not be condemned on account of their strangeness, but a greater effort should be made properly to appreciate them. Unfortunately, however, Fontane does not make all these characters live.[1] It is, therefore, impossible for him to display their common humanity; and the further one gets into the novel, the more this weakness becomes evident.

The plot is of the barest. Lehnert Menz, a young Silesian, has been ill brought up, and is given to poaching. He has a grudge against Opitz, a gamekeeper who has had him sent to prison, and has also behaved badly towards him during his army service. After useless attempts at reforming his ways, Lehnert decides to fight a duel with Opitz in a strange way. Disguised, he lies in wait for the keeper, but allows him to fire first; but the keeper's gun misfires. Thereupon Lehnert shoots him down. Making good his escape to America, he is successful in a gold rush, but afterwards loses his money. Finally he settles in a Mennonite community, and falls in love with his master's daughter. But when everything appears to point to a happy future, he dies miserably on the hills, as the result of an accident.

During the time that the action is taking place in Silesia much extraneous matter is introduced. Despite the fact that their conversation turns at times on Lehnert, the Espes, with Kowalski and Unverdorben,

[1] Thus Ruth, Toby, Kaulbars, Krähbiel, Gunpowder Face do not rise above lay figures.

are merely foisted off on the reader by an author desirous of introducing such people somewhere. Their reappearance at the close of the novel does nothing to warrant their inclusion; it is in itself unnecessary. When the action is transferred to America, the valuation of what, strictly speaking, lies outside the plot becomes more difficult. More especially in a novel where the plot is so slender, a full appreciation of the character of the hero is imperative; and thus all matter which throws any light on Lehnert must be held to be rightly included. Many of the people who appear at Nogat-Ehre, together with the incidents formed round them, have a real significance in the exposition of Lehnert's character—from Ruth who is the cause of the re-awakening within him, to Totto who arouses in him sentiments of humanity. On the other hand, much that is heard of L'Hermite is beside the point, while the affairs of Kaulbars and his wife have no real bearing upon Lehnert. All that is introduced with regard to missionary work, the missionary Krähbiel, the Indian Chief, Gunpowder Face, his death and burial, must be considered entirely on its own merits. So considered, it will appear somewhat clumsily handled and unconvincing.

In some of Fontane's novels there may be difficulty in deciding who is the principal character; this difficulty cannot arise in *Quitt*. The principal character is undoubtedly Lehnert Menz. On this character Fontane has evidently expended much care, but without very definite results; it is neither a success nor a failure. The reader does not gain a clear impression of Lehnert Menz, although it would appear by the decisive ending of the

novel that the author expects him so to do. Lehnert is not merely in L'Hermite's phrase 'a sentimental Cain'; there are more contradictions within him than are there suggested. Moreover, he is not thoroughly Cain: he finds a certain amount of rest and is not continually attacked by his conscience. One is inclined to agree with his mother that he would have been better without his bit of schooling; he has learnt just enough to unsettle his mind. Yet he has many good points. He is neither avaricious, nor unwilling to place his abilities at the service of others. He is capable of deep affection, yet his emotions seem to be ruled in some way by his pride. One cannot deny him a certain gentlemanliness, and yet he is marked throughout by self-conceit. And this self-conceit becomes semi-morbid at times, as when he places his life and that of Opitz in God's hands. The further one attempts to go in the analysis of this character the more one experiences a sense of disappointment. The endeavour provides an object lesson in the difficulties a novelist has to face in exposing a character which is continually overshadowed by a set theory of how it must finally evolve.

As his name suggests, Camille L'Hermite is not an ordinary person. Having once played an active part in revolutionary endeavour, this Frenchman remains a dreamer of fantastic Utopian dreams; yet he can employ considerable technical ability towards definite ends. Thus his self-imposed epithet '*blagueur*' is only half-justified. An atheist, who cannot quite escape the clutches of superstition, he leaves the impression that his mental derangement was present before the murder

of the Archbishop of Paris, to which deed he himself attributes it. Tolerant of the average people around him, he even develops at times a certain kindliness, although he does not always restrain a sarcastic tongue. It will be seen that L'Hermite is constituted in part in accordance with a traditional novel type, but it has to be admitted that Fontane succeeds in making him an individual. This success, by no means of a higher order, is due partly to passing intimate touches,[1] and partly to the management of the speech. Whereas Lehnert's speech in Germany is a mixture of decisiveness and uncertainty, marked respectively by the use of short sentences, and by their occasional overcrowding, and whereas in America his silence becomes more indicative, L'Hermite talks in a manner at once similar and dissimilar. His manner of speaking is also decisive, even somewhat agressive, but it is more pointed, more sardonic, better informed. Again, it is never tentative: where the Frenchman uses longer sentences they are the natural outcome of his enjoyment of a half-ironical picture he is painting. The introduction of the scraps of French do something towards giving an impression of a disjointed character.

In Obadja Hornbostel, Fontane presents again an individual born of a traditional type. The chief turning-point in this individualising of a type would appear to be in the fact that Obadja imposes on Lehnert a period of waiting for the hand of Ruth. Here he boldly differs from the usual employers of the type by definitely associating Obadja with the reader's conception of a

[1] As those on his early life.

patriarch. The man's very name may suggest to the sceptical and ironical [1] that there is something pantomimic about him. Yet it would be safer to say that he is not without artificiality; his speech would support this judgment. Indeed, his manner of speaking is a true guide to the fundamental traits of his character. Self-possessed and unhesitating, it is assertive in an unassertive way. It is pastoral, but not unctuous, weighty but not pedantic; it is marked neither by superlatives nor by circumlocutions. As the very capable head of a flourishing Mennonite community, Obadja is rather naturally a little self-righteous, and, reflecting on the general character of strict sectarians, one might add is also fonder of money that his tenets properly allow. But he has nothing in him of the bully or the crank; his morals are sound, and if his life is over-sober he is not destitute of human feeling. Finally, he does as he would be done by: disliking all interference with the ordering of his own life, he deprecates interference with the lives of others. In witness whereof one may consider the motley assembly his house shields and his tolerance at once of Maruschka's catholicism and L'Hermite's atheism.

In a book crowded with portraits of varying value, there are only two further characters seriously developed: Opitz and Frau Menz. That Lehnert has inherited some of the qualities from his mother is at once apparent. The mother's speech, with its crowding of one sentence upon another, continually suggests that the speaker is uncertain of herself and of others. One could not credit

[1] As to Kaulbars and L'Hermite.

her with truthfulness. She is without self-respect, without principle, devoid of morality; she is afraid only of an authority which she cannot hoodwink. She will cringe or play the sycophant at the slightest prospect of gain. To her undeveloped mind life possesses nothing but occasional possibilities of material pleasure of an elementary order. Convinced that such pleasure is attained by cunning, she is always acting. Fontane has been proof against the temptation to throw any lustre over an essentially ignoble character: he has not endowed the mother with a beautifying love of her son.

On account of the name he shares with the seventeenth-century poet, Opitz instantly appears to the well-informed reader as a man of much pomposity, many faults, but some worth at bottom. He is a petty megalomaniac. It may be quite true that he does only his duty, but it is equally certain that he takes pleasure in its unpleasant side—a trait which distinguishes him from Baltzer Bocholt. Moreover, he confuses the execution of his duty with the exacting of homage to himself; he is even willing to be silent as to Lehnert's delinquencies, if the latter will bow to him. Yet he is neither a coward nor an active bully; he has moments of goodwill towards others, which one feels would come more frequently, were it not for his all-devouring pride. Besides, his dying request that no vengeance should be visited upon his assailant, points to a certain bigness about the man that has been thwarted by petty squabbles. And his manner of speaking, while it fully illustrates his sense of position and his assertive nature, serves to corroborate, by means of the many qualifying clauses

that mark it, the belief that he is not maliciously despotic, as Lehnert so firmly believes.

To all appearance more unintentionally than intentionally, Fontane has sketched in Pastor Siebenhaar a man at once resembling and differing from Obadja. His self-possession springs, as does the Mennonite's, from his fitness to do the work demanded of him and the consciousness of his success. He also speaks as if in no fear of contradiction, but the lack of insistence on 'I' confirms one in the view that he is devoid of that dangerous self-esteem which is hardly ever absent in Obadja. Moreover, he is a kindly old man, with a simple joy in his flowers and his pets to which the Mennonite could not attain.

Several of the character sketches which have elements of interest fail because they contain no genuine suggestion of life. Such are Kaulbars, Espe and his wife, Toby and Ruth; even the considerable amount of speaking done by Toby does nothing to amend the defect. Yet occasionally in slighter sketches the novelist gives by one or two touches the impression of a living individual.[1] He aids himself in some cases by suggestive names.[2] As it would be impossible to deduce Ruth's age from the language she employs, and as Fontane has not introduced dialect where it seems called for, so the language of the minor characters, on the whole, cannot be said to be managed with much skill.

The exposition of the characters in *Quitt* proceeds in the first part to a large extent through incident, both major and minor. The use of incident is continued when

[1] The best example is furnished in Maruschka.

[2] Cf. Sophus Unverdorben, Oberst von Unruh.

the scene is laid in America, but has reference to one or two characters only. Instead, Fontane relies much more on the remarks interchanged between the different characters. Almost without exception, however, he leaves the reader to draw his own conclusions, not suggesting which way he himself leans in his views on any particular person. Surveying the novel as a whole, it will be found that the exposition of character is aided more by this interchanged comment than in any other manner. But exactly as incident remains of importance in the case of the chief characters, so also direct psychological analysis cannot be overlooked in the case of the hero himself. In accordance with his usual custom, Fontane at times introduces this in the monologue form. Otherwise such analysis is either lacking or negligible.

The hero, again, is the only character to have a scene confined to himself; and, apart from the scenes between Opitz and his wife in the first part, he appears also in the scenes with two characters. The most important of these scenes take place between Lehnert and his mother, Opitz, Obadja, and L'Hermite respectively; but it should be noticed that the scenes immediately preceding the catastrophe are between Lehnert and the dog, Uncas. As is natural, the scenes with two are relatively less common in the second part of the novel. Throughout they depend greatly on the actual spoken word, but this in itself is frequently productive of a dramatic tension which Fontane, however, does not seek to use to the greatest emotional advantage. Even the culminating scene between Lehnert and Opitz, where the action itself is of a dramatic nature, is restricted to

a compass with which many novelists would be unsatisfied;[1] in this he remains true to his own traditions. Nevertheless, the tendency to dramatic situations of a rather common character is stronger than in most of Fontane's novels.[2] Group scenes with varying numbers of characters show the author to greater advantage. Such scenes are not of great duration, nor are they given with much attention to detail. Occasionally they are merely suggested.[3] Where he enters into detail, as in the Mennonite baptism ceremony, the result is cumbersome. Abrupt endings are not common, although in the first part contrasted scenes follow immediately upon one another. Real continuity of the scenes is obviously not one of the author's aims.

On the whole, the settings are not given with Fontane's customary certainty of touch, but those in Silesia are better than those in America. Even in Silesia, however, the outdoor settings are laboured, and the reader carries away no such impression of the district as he gains of the Harz from *Cécile*. It is a remarkable fact, but thoroughly in consonance with the author's love of flowers, that where these are introduced the settings always assume a less laboured appearance. With the indoor settings, except on the few occasions where he attempts thorough reproduction, Fontane is more successful; but the American settings again rank below the Silesian. For the former, he was deficient both in

[1] Cf. also the treatment of Lehnert's disappearance at the end of Ch. XV.

[2] The presence of L'Hermite is in itself continually suggestive of dramatic possibilities.

[3] As that with Lehnert and the singing schoolgirls, in Ch. XI.

genuine knowledge and in confidence. Of those settings which fall within Obadja's house hardly one is felt to be satisfactory. The incidental settings are by no means lacking in variety, reaching as they do from a railway train to an Indian's hut, and from the village tap-room to the pastor's study; but the author is uniform in not offering any startling contrast between the settings and the scenes.

To the unconvincingness of the settings in *Quitt* falls to be added the failure in the matter of proportion. If the proportion between speech and reflection is passable in the case of Lehnert, there is in the case of the other more important characters greater or less over-weighting of reflection by speech.[1] This over-weighting becomes complete in the case of Tony Hornbostel, where the speech offers no insight into the character. Again, the tragedy is not sufficiently punctuated by the comic element, more especially as Fontane's non-bitter irony is not much in evidence. The second part is peculiarly weak in this respect. Neither is the proportion between the action which is actually given and that which is merely reported satisfactorily maintained. In arriving at this conclusion regard is had to the importance, not simply to the bulk of the reported action, which includes such matters as the origin of the feud between Lehnert and Opitz, Lehnert's earlier imprisonment, his doings in America prior to his settlement at Nogat-Ehre, L'Hermite's revolutionary adventures and his escape from penal servitude. In fact, despite the undoubted

[1] Judging from some points of view, a possible exception might be made in the case of Opitz.

weakness in presentation previously discussed, the proportion best preserved is that between description and action. The more petty incidents are not to be overlooked.

One is dissatisfied also with the title, remarking that Fontane has not succeeded in creating a corresponding atmosphere. *Quitt* certainly suggests a personal equation, which is, generally speaking, lost in the wider and impersonal issue concerning the wages of sin. Although a proportion of the matter is not connected with Lehnert, it may be suggested that the author should have called his novel simply *Lehnert Menz.* By so doing he would have left it open to the reader to supply a sub-title in agreement with the major impression left upon his mind. The chapters, marked by a certain uniformity in length,[1] are without headings. As a rule the endings are not pointed;[2] but no rule can be established as to the running on of one chapter into another. Endings of a foreshadowing nature are not unknown.[3] The use of asterisks in subdividing chapters is found in Chapter II. and regularly thereafter. In a book containing so many failures, it is a little surprising to find that they are sometimes employed with skill to indicate a change of mood within the chapter.[4]

The letters that occur are mainly designed to acquaint

[1] A chapter is occasionally distinguished by exceptional length, as XXIV., or brevity, as I. and XIII.

[2] But cf. in contrast to the general rule the ending to Ch. XIII.

[3] The best is that of Ch. XXX.

[4] The best example is furnished in Ch. XXXV., where the division is made between the inactive resignation of L'Hermite and the decision of Obadja to act.

the reader with facts with which he is wholly or partially unfamiliar.[1] Only in an indirect fashion do any of them serve to illustrate character. Very slight use is made of verse in any connection. There is no actual interposition of the author, while the occasions on which he takes the reader into his confidence are very rare.[2]

When one sees that two characters—Lehnert and his mother—are introduced in the first sentence, together with an exterior impression of the latter, one anticipates a style which will not be veiling but illuminating. And certainly the style is never marked by confusion. Yet it becomes heavy at times and drags—something hardly to be expected from the author of *Schach von Wuthenow*. This would seem to be due in great part to the absence of irony which Fontane would appear on occasion definitely to have avoided. It is undoubtedly true that the most fluent writing is found where L'Hermite brings in an ironical tone. The lack of spontaniety is further marked in the paragraph construction. The short paragraph is not common, even in conversation, while above the average length paragraphs occur which would appear protracted in most writers. This decided departure from his usual manner points to a lack of ease strange in Fontane. Yet the vocabulary itself does not contain recondite words, falling far outside a conversational compass; and even clumsy compounds are very rare.[3]

[1] No value can be perceived in the introduction of a letter to Kaulbars from his sister in Berlin, Ch. XXVIII, 239–40.

[2] Cf. Ch. III., 14, 'our Opitz,' and Ch. XXXV., 290, 'our Kaulbars.'

[3] Cf. however, such a word as *Menschheitsbeglückungsideal*, Ch. XX., 167.

Considering that such a great part of the action takes place in the United States, and that one of the principal characters is a Frenchman, it must be admitted that Fontane has kept the novel very free from foreign words. Of those that are used the English do not fall far short of the French, while the Latin borrowings do not approach the author's average complement. Borrowings from other languages are negligible; hybrids are also rare. In the first part of the novel foreign phrases are almost entirely lacking;[1] in the second part English or French tags are found. The French, which is confined to L'Hermite, sometimes swells into complete sentences, but this remains the exception. As a rule, the author is content with something less ambitious.[2] English fragments are placed to the credit of several characters; they do not appear in the least imposing.[3] The author is not wholly guiltless of offering remarkable language mixtures.[4] Skilful use is made of parenthesis; while the unfinished sentence is kept within bounds of moderation. On the other hand, one may be tempted to think that the devices for the display of emphasis, such as the exclamation mark and the spaced word, are rather too prominent. Fontane remains true to the rhetorical question, whether answered or unanswered. While the style is not adorned with striking similes or metaphor, it is distinguished by the recurrence of short passages

[1] But cf. *au naturel; cavaliere servente.*

[2] Cf. *au contraire, un peu curieux, mon cher ennemi, tête carée.*

[3] Cf. my darling, now let us see, poor man.

[4] Cf. Ch. XVII., 140 : Henry Wood, Agent of the United States Government und Kommandant von Fort MacCulloch.

picturing some group of trees or flowers. The following may be taken as an example :—

> Some had in front of the door an arbor made of trellis-work round which the honeysuckle and syringa were clinging; from this arbor four or five stone steps led down first to the avenue of acacias and then to the stream. But every house had a front garden surrounded by a wooden railing; in this garden, between the borders of box and yew, grew a few dahlias, but mostly mallows and sunflowers, just as if it had been a garden in the lowlands between the Nogat and the Vistula.—XIX., 156.

Despite such passages, *Quitt* is in agreement with all Fontane's novels in taking men and women as its chief subject matter; these including people of varying ages, amongst whom the male characters receive more attention. All belong to the middle or to the serving class, and all are of the land rather than of the town. The conglomeration of people belonging to different races is a further unusual feature in Fontane. Children are brought in only in groups, a little general characterisation being attempted in the case of the schoolchildren at Nogat-Ehre. Animate nature is represented, before all, by the great Newfoundland, Uncas, who, forgotten for some time after his introduction, assumes importance in the final events. A little is made of the keeper's dog, Diana, and of Lehnert's magnificent cock; but this is in the first part. In the second part, which purports to take place on a great farm, there are only the scantiest references to animals. On the other hand, inanimate nature is never entirely neglected, while it has been seen that on occasion it receives special attention. The

author's interest is not, however, confined solely to flowers, plants, and trees; he lingers over wooded hills and fields of waving corn.[1] And he scarcely tires of tracing a path, more particularly if it be through a wood.

Despite the motley array of characters, extremely little is made of anecdotal matter; and although the action in the second part takes place on a farm, the reader learns nothing of farming. If the differences between America and Prussia are treated of in a general manner, there is no actual political discussion. In literature one finds an admiring, and, compared with Fontane's usual methods, somewhat lengthy appreciation of Pestalozzi's *Lienhardt und Gertrud*. There is further some criticism of Bret Harte's Californian stories to the effect that the colours are too ideal, and the characters are endowed with a nobility and inner worth they were very unlikely to possess. Whereas he has nothing to say of farming, Fontane does not commit the error of portraying the Mennonite household without touching on religion. A fair indication of the sectarian practices is given, however little it may impress the reader; while outlines of short sermons by Obadja are included. The subject of missions to the Indians receives some attention. On the other hand, there is no wrangling, learned or otherwise, as to the respective values of different churches or denominations.

It is natural that one should look, in connection with a novel so different in many respects from the others, to see if the author manifests any change in his attitude

[1] Cf. a similar tendency in *Cécile*.

to life. The story opens in 1877,[1] and in consequence the remarks on Prussia are to be applied to a victorious state and to a system which has proved its efficiency. There is an obvious attachment to Prussia, any criticism being of a mild type. Fontane finds it more easy to pick holes in the Prussian himself. But if he admires the Prussian system, there is no narrow uniformity about his own mind : he can take an interest in many things. On the other hand, outside men and women themselves, nothing would seem to arouse his enthusiasm. He most nearly approaches enthusiasm over flowers. With regard to men and women it should be noted that Fontane is more concerned with their exterior appearance in *Quitt* than in any other of his novels. As usual he is concerned with the inter-relationships of people, and not merely where the people are of opposite sex. Where the question is one between a man and a woman, he manifests in several places an attitude of suspicion which is not found in his stronger works. If it is obvious that he will never overlook small events, because of the glamour of the great, it is equally certain that the attention he pays to such small events is greatly a matter of mood. This deference to moods is also exaggerated in *Quitt*. Yet one can hardly take such a statement as the following to be merely the outcome of a mood, when Obadja says to Lehnert :—

'And I like to look every one in the eyes. The eyes tell even more than the voice.'—XIX., 159.

[1] Cf. Ch. II., 10, where Siebenhaar says : 'I have been living here now since the year '29, and in another two years I shall have my jubilee.'

It is, nevertheless, in opposition to the author's methods in other books, where he frequently gives scarcely any indication of facial expression. In keeping at once with his tendency to make light of much that convention condemns and with that to establish generalisations on human life, stands this quotation :—

> For she was a woman who, in company with most who can boast of a past, had a good and brave heart, and at all events a contempt for all virtuous and officious phraseology. —XVI., 138.

Despite such differences as have been noted, one must conclude that Fontane's philosophy in *Quitt* does not differ fundamentally from that in his more successful work. Finding nothing in life to arouse his emotions beyond measure, he remains tolerant—to be exact, more tolerant than usual, for he discards almost entirely his customary irony. He has little belief in man carrying out his own destiny, and would have people strive to make the best of what the gods have given them. In a spirit of resignation, even a man like L'Hermite need not live entirely in the gloom; while sociability may add to the satisfaction of so decided a character as Obadja.

On the whole, taking into consideration the possibilities offered by the nature of the construction of the novel, one is disappointed by the sense of indefiniteness which is left after the attempt to analyse its thought. As has been seen, there are no excellences marked in any province sufficient to outweigh this and other disappointing features. Accordingly, *Quitt* can be classed, despite the attention it demands from the student of Fontane's work, as one of his least successful novels.

CHAPTER V

Berlin Plutocracy: *L'Adultera; Frau Jenny Treibel*

It is in the two novels to be studied in this chapter that Fontane approaches most nearly to that group of novelists to which belong such writers as Fritz Mauthner, Theophil Zolling, and Paul Lindau who, not without affinities with earlier writers such as Heinrich Smidt and Julius von Voss, go to form the Berlin School. It would be folly in the staunchest admirer of Fontane to deny that these novelists had no influence upon him; but it would be equally beside the mark to suggest that he is at any time merely one of them. Zealous reader as he was, Fontane became himself when he set pen to paper; what he acquired became part of himself. But, as he lacked the unfailing re-creative genius of a Shakespeare, he does not always stand beyond the reach of criticism. What Fontane had extracted in earlier years from the writings of Voss and Smidt he has undoubtedly used in an able manner, but in this connection two important reservations fall to be made. From Smidt he could derive nothing but the merest suggestion of material and construction, so remote are the former's conception and handling of character and situation from those of true realism; while with Voss he has many points of

similarity in disposition and temperament which are not to be confused with literary discipleship. It should be particularly noticed that the ironical touch is essential to a true novel of Berlin and is something that Fontane has in common with Voss and the younger group, not something he has borrowed from them. One feels, on the other hand, that it was owing to the influence of this younger group that Fontane came to treat of the life of the citizen class, and to illustrate it more through type than through individual character. It is probably true, moreover, that Fontane was induced by the work of this group to endeavour to arrange his ironical and satirical comments, so as to achieve the most striking passing effects. He came to see, further, more clearly the possibilities which lie in the strangely mixed society of a great modern city. Yet Fontane can in no sense be regarded as one, even as the chief of these writers. They are in many cases also playwrights, with a playwright's liking for striking and highly emotional scenes; Fontane understands nothing of stagecraft, as his own record as a theatre-critic sufficiently proves. His attitude towards incident and even towards the main action must, accordingly, diverge from theirs. And as their work as dramatists resulted in the main from their study of the contemporary French stage, so their fiction is highly indebted to the example of the French *feuilletonists*. Certainly a writer such as Lindau rises at times above the level of the *feuilleton*, but he never actually abandons its outstanding characteristics. Fontane, on the other hand, rarely approaches them. If one is willing to accept the view of a French critic on a form of fiction

which his countrymen have at certain epochs brought to such perfection, one will believe :—

> Le feuilleton véritablement digne de ce nom doit éviter d'être littéraire, et rechercher par-dessus tout le pathétique violent, propre à fournir le sujet d'une affiche aux tons crus.—Leo Claretie.[1]

It cannot be denied that Fontane takes but the scantiest interest in that '*affiche aux tons crus.*'

The actual story contained in *L'Adultera* was suggested to Fontane by a Berlin scandal of the day. In his presentation of it, Fontane aims at insisting on the inevitable, that Melanie would necessarily at some time desert Van der Straaten, because a materially minded man, even if good-hearted, can never hold the love of a woman who is more than a doll. While wishing to impress the reader with a sense of the futility of human endeavour under certain circumstances, he points also to the one great fallacy upon which plutocratic society is constructed, to the implicit belief that wealth is the measure of happiness. He is at pains to show that true love between man and woman is the most satisfying of all possessions, and that misfortunes which undo false attachments strengthen real unions. Again, he desires to display how the materially-minded man does more harm with his thoughtless and tasteless words than good in a practical way. And generally he aims at giving an impression of the possible associates and habits of a rich citizen of Berlin, not a member of a snob circle.

[1] In L. Petit de Juleville : *Histoire de la Langue et de la Littérature Française*, Vol. VII., Ch. X., 563.

As regards the success of the author's aims, one is hardly convinced, in the first instance, that Melanie is bound to leave her husband. One feels, certainly, that people who play with a difficulty, as do Melanie and Van der Straaten, cannot wholly stand outside it. But Melanie, although she does not love Van der Straaten, has her children and her liberty, as well as the advantages accruing to her from a marriage such as hers; neither does one find sufficient indication why she should be prepared to give up all this—especially the children of whom she is supposed to be very fond—in order to make a fresh start. One knows that it is possible, but one is not shown that it is very probable. Still one perceives with increasing distinctness, that although he would not consciously estrange her, Van der Straaten is bound to create a gulf between them; and this despite the fact that he is not maliciously or callously inclined. It is just those things he likes to say and do which are so contrary to that part of her which he does not comprehend. Apart from the mere theory of the position, one cannot allow that Fontane with his actual people, Melanie and Rubehn, has shown how true love is strengthened under misfortune. One may be influenced from the beginning by the fact that Rubehn is not a sympathetic figure; but certainly nothing shows why Melanie, brought up in luxury and having lived amid it so long, should feel joyful at having to earn her own living and feel her love grow through that necessity. Where Fontane succeeds best is in giving a general impression of the Van der Straaten circle, its tone, and its views on the spending of time. This is accomplished,

apart from the conversation, by general outlines, more than by insisting on particular personalities. One perceives that smartness is the watchword, and that most things are allowable; on the other hand, one learns, as from the picnic at Stralau, that there is nothing very dangerous about the company which contains such an overgrown boy as Elimar Schulze. The tone of the company comes home to the reader more especially through the sparing use which is made of the ambitious staff-officer, Gryczinski. The level of taste and intelligence is manifested in the conversation. Only, it may be added that in connection with *L'Adultera*, the question arises whether the introduction of groups of persons with developed mental activity should be sanctioned so frequently in the whole series of Fontane's novels. Their appearance, undoubtedly, points to an eclectic method on the part of the author.

The plot, which is introduced by a considerable body of remarks on Van der Straaten,[1] remains in effect merely an outline. A young woman, for some ten years apparently happily married to a much older man, becomes estranged from her husband. A young guest comes to the house, and a mutual affection arises between him and the wife. The wife decides to desert her husband. Discovering her on the eve of departure, the husband, nevertheless, allows her to carry out her plan. After a decree of divorce has been pronounced, the lovers are married; and despite material bad luck enjoy happiness, while the deserted man bears no grudge. Such a

[1] Contrary to Fontane's usual method, Ch. I. contains no conversation.

plot is, of course, perfectly plain from the beginning, and it is so slight as to render the classing of the extraneous matter extremely difficult. It is obvious that much will have to be introduced to aid in the exposition of the characters. Examination shows that there is practically no fundamentally extraneous matter; anecdotes, as in *Quitt*, being only in scant evidence. This does not mean that the best occasions have always been chosen for the introduction of extraneous matter, but such matter, in almost all instances, has a significant part in the development of the novel as a whole. It is true, however, that there is frequently no inner connection between the scenes thus added; such a scene as that of the picnic is obviously given at will by the author without reference to technical propriety. One feels that the somewhat random choice is the outcome of the author's desire not to leave familiar ground. The reconciliatory ending has been condemned by critics [1] in a manner which is strikingly indicative of the dangers of a hurried or general criticism of a novel. Any one who cannot credit the friendly attitude of Van der Straaten to Melanie and Rubehn has failed properly to appreciate his character. This attitude is, in his case, the only consequent one, as the examination of his character will prove.

The characters of *L'Adultera* vary in age and profession, but the only one approaching the vulgar is the music-teacher, Anastasia Schmidt. In the contrasting professions it is possible that the influence of the Berlin novelists may be seen. The Swiss sisters de Caparoux

[1] Meyer and Mielke.

are the only non-Germans, and even they are supposed to have become German in sentiment. It should be remarked, however, that Rubehn has travelled much abroad.[1] The characters outside the social circle are servitors. The chief female character, Melanie, is of supreme importance.[2] The name itself is suggestive of something above the commonplace, and its bearer is hardly an everyday person, otherwise the story would have read differently. Melanie is intended to be one of those women who need more than ease or money to satisfy them; but the author does not succeed in bringing the reader to regard her as such a woman. Her brave remarks when Rubehn is ruined are rather astonishing, and the deeds which follow much more so. Fontane presents Melanie as a young woman who has made a rich marriage, happy in her children, possessing wit and beauty, but discontented a little because her husband is not genteel, and because his affection becomes at times rather boring. From this, one may infer that she is not a doll like her sister Jacobine; but her manner of self-assertion does not suggest latent energy in enterprise. Nor does her mode of life, apart from her relations with her husband, suggest that she is especially strong in character. One can well believe it to be natural that she should pass her life in a condition fluctuating between content and discontent, and never reaching either extreme; but one cannot believe that she would take the decisive steps on which the action of the novel rests.

[1] Cf. Bülow in *Schach von Wuthenow*, Gordon in *Cécile*.

[2] In contrast to a similar theme in *Cécile*, where the chief male character is not so subservient to the female.

As far as this can be defined, her character is at first sufficiently well supported by her speech; after the elopement, however, what she says is unnaturally sententious and over-coloured by the author's desire to make the change in her convincing. Finally, Melanie is not actually attractive: she would appear to fall below the level even of Van der Straaten, for she loves only herself.

Although even in the later chapters the novelist hardly insists on his introduction, Rubehn is more successful. To a considerable extent Rubehn is the type of the wise young man; correspondingly his speech, never foolish, is all of one pattern. Its annoying sameness suggests an attitude not vulgarly struck. On the other hand, the name with the pretentious 'h' conjures up a character at least semi-ludicrous, thereby showing that it has been misapplied. Rubehn's overdrawn remarks on music on his first appearance are in consonance with the fact that he never acts in any other manner than that temporarily expected. One feels that the author has put life into this very proper young man, because one dislikes him so much more than if he had been a mere figure. One wrongs Rubehn when one regards his love for Melanie as due to self-satisfaction in a full rounding-off of himself; his love is genuine. And in a sense one wrongs him throughout, because it is the more obvious points of his character alone with which one is definitely acquainted; to the indications of most excellent, but partially hidden qualities, one remains indifferent.

One wonders if the name Van der Straaten is intended

to convey a suggestion of the heavy directness of the Dutch. The bearer of the name is undoubtedly the best drawn and most lifelike character in the novel. One can hear him dropping those remarks that verge on coarseness, and see that peculiar smile, half satisfaction, one quarter apprehension and the other defiance, by which they are accompanied. One knows that he truly appreciates the pleasures of the table, especially in company that does not desire to maintain a fully decorous attitude; and one feels that although he is not ignorant, nor yet genuinely contemptuous of the niceties of conduct, he would merely cut a worse figure by attempting to adopt them. One agrees with the old gentlewoman that he has a good heart; yet one suspects that at times he must be unbearable. His weaknesses once known, however, one could come to like him, apart from the fact that he is frequently very good company. That such a man has no beliefs and no God cannot be objectionable. Indeed, considering his undoubted tendency to place all his faith in his wife, one cannot but admire his silent resignation. In the case of Van der Straaten, the management of the speech is of the utmost importance; and Fontane has not failed in this respect. It is sententious, but naturally and not foolishly. It passes very well from putting openly what others would clothe a little, to giving veiled suggestions which others would avoid. And throughout he is seen to be desirous more of making an impression, than of deceiving; hence the big words and the introduction of striking comparisons.

The minor characters, with which Fontane is usually so successful, must be set down as a failure. This is due

in part, no doubt, to the fact that the author thought primarily of types and not of individuals. Nevertheless, the most lifelike of them, Gryczinski, the ambitious staff-officer, is at the same time the most typical. The others of whatever sex or station do not live; they merely make remarks. Further, because Fontane is so uncertain as to these characters, he allows them to speak too much in the same way; there is little essential difference between the speech of the old bachelor of good family and that of the miserly gardener. In consequence one is rather inclined to tire of their remarks; and at times one is actually bored. The only characters which fall outside the general grouping are the Van der Straaten children, whom Fontane makes no effort to portray. They remain figures to be used when required.

The scenes vary from group scenes to those with a single character, but the latter are uncommon, and the character is always Melanie. In a general sense the scenes even where there are only two characters show no tendency towards the dramatic which, indeed, the author often seeks to avoid, or at least to deprive of some of its force.[1] On the whole, the scenes are of fitting length, although purely conversational scenes, such as that of the dinner at Van der Straaten's, may become wearisome, because the conversation is not of particular interest. The principal character appears in almost every scene; while in each scene the action is subsidiary to the speech. Frequently the action becomes entirely negligible, and is useful only to break up the conversation.

[1] It should be remembered in this connection that Van der Straaten and Rubehn are properly undramatic in their conduct.

The setting, in general, is the city and surroundings of Berlin. Where it lies in Italy or Switzerland, it is a mere shadow or suggestion. Indoor and outdoor settings are used; while those that combine the two, as verandas and balconies, for which Fontane has a liking in most of his novels, are not wanting here. While none of the settings are detailed, the outdoor are more fully given than the indoor; or it may be in certain cases that Fontane is more able, with a few touches, to give an impression of an outdoor setting. On the whole, Fontane does not make so much out of suggestion as in some of his other novels, although he introduces occasionally settings not usual with him, as for example the inside of a cab. Two settings at turning points are under glass: when Melanie feels Van der Straaten is shaming her in the covered veranda of the inn at Stralau, and when Melanie and Rubehn meet in the palm-house. The introduction of this latter setting, which certainly verges on the crude in its suggestiveness, is not in keeping with the novelist's general practice.

As regards proportion, that of speech to reflection is not badly maintained, more especially as much of the speech does not call in any way for corresponding reflection, and as in the weightier parts reflection is not neglected. Many tests of proportion, as that of description to action, of reported to described action, of comedy to tragedy, hardly fall to be applied. Yet the general proportion of the novel is destroyed by the complete overshadowing of the action by the speech. Remembering that the novel is designed to display not merely the habits of society and the mental states of certain people,

but also some events in the lives of some people, one recognises that the action has been cut out too ruthlessly.

In *Frau Jenny Treibel* Fontane intends to illustrate the methods of the strong-willed and materially-minded woman who is tireless in achieving her own ends where material interests are at stake. Incidentally he aims at exposing the fact that where there is external idealism and sentimentality, the more unshakable is the inward materialism and lack of genuine sentiment. On the other hand, he desires to show that a woman who has some true feeling and some actual intellectual capacity cannot marry for money alone, although she may protest, as does Corinna, that only money is to be valued. He attempts, further, to add a contrast between the two worlds, that of culture and small means and that of veneer and large means. In consequence, one has in addition to Corinna and Frau Jenny, Schmidt and Treibel, Marcell and Leopold.

On the whole Fontane may be said to succeed in his aims, which is the more to be remarked on account of the slightness of the novel. This very slightness is proof of his grip of his subject, and his decisiveness in handling his characters. There is never cause to hesitate as to Jenny's ability to conduct matters in her own way. The contemptuous manner in which she treats her husband's political aspirations forces one to admit how sure she is of herself; a weaker woman would certainly have railed against something in which she saw no point. Again, in a highly skilful manner, Fontane depicts Jenny, brought to the actual issue, quietly

summoning Hildegard, where a weaker novelist would cause her to declaim on the matter of getting her own way. Finally, it is easy to believe that Jenny will act decisively in all hard matters of fact, when one is so clearly shown that her idealism and sentimentality apply only to things and conditions which do not, and are entirely unlikely to exist.[1] Fontane is not quite so happy in bringing out the other side of the question. It is true, one credits Corinna with a final revolt from marrying a null such as Leopold, merely for money; for it is obvious that Corinna argues that money alone counts very safely from the position of having the wit which money cannot buy. Nevertheless, she would not appear ever to be purged of materialism. And, although one witnesses her domestic abilities, one has a presentiment that she would have been more likely to look for a man with both money and wit, than to have married a schoolmaster. Where Fontane is successful here, the success is superficial.

Within the limits he wisely sets himself, the author handles the contrast between the two social spheres effectively. The reader is left with a distinct impression which is strengthened by the recollections of the varying attitudes adopted towards the young Englishman, Mr Nelson, and towards royalty. The speaking manners of Treibel and Schmidt are sufficient in themselves to create differing atmospheres, without the author becoming at all extravagant or pedantic in their exposition. At the same time the obvious likenesses in Treibel and

[1] As when she fancies herself a laundrymaid, or the wife of a poor scholar.

Schmidt, the love of good society, of good food and good wine, of talk, of self, are justly weakened in the next generation, where Leopold and Marcell display one great likeness founded on an indisputable unlikeness. Leopold is moody from weakness, Marcell from strength.

As in *L'Adultera*, the plot is of the slightest. Jenny Treibel, the wife of a successful factory owner, desires to marry her weak-willed son, Leopold, to some one of whom she may boast, but not to the sister of her elder son's wife, whom the latter tries to press. Corinna, the daughter of the old schoolmaster, Schmidt, has designs upon Leopold, although her schoolmaster cousin, Marcell, is in love with her. Corinna induces Leopold to announce an engagement which Jenny declares shall not be carried out. Forced to act without delay, Jenny calls to her assistance the very girl against whom she formerly set herself. Corinna changes gradually in her attitude, and eventually marries Marcell. Thereafter follows reconciliation between the two groups.

Unfortunately, Fontane makes too many suggestions and introduces too many characters for a definitely simple treatment. The attempt to discover any purely extraneous matter shows exactly to what the author's method led. As purely extraneous, one is inclined to class only the descriptions of Treibel's political activity; and this one does more because Fontane has failed properly to make them part of the general picture, than because they have no right to appear in that picture. All else, even what centres round the schoolmasters, the retired professional singer and others who have no part

in the family concerns, cannot well be ruled out; it is in place as assisting in one way or another the ultimate contrast. One concludes that having gone so far in suggesting and in part providing a larger canvas, Fontane should have gone still further. Despite its many excellences, the novel remains too unmistakably a mixture of types.

There is an omission from the list of characters common to *L'Adultera* and *Frau Jenny Treibel* from what one might term Fontane's general list. There is no clergyman. Otherwise there is considerable choice in age and station, the child, however, remaining a shadow. Only a solitary figure breaks in upon the uniform nationality. It should be remarked that, despite the dominant character of Jenny, the interest is more divided between the representatives of the opposite sexes, than in *L'Adultera*.

The name *Jenny Treibel* sounds trivial to the ear, and its possessor succeeds in throwing off the adjective only by the untiring and relentless manner in which she accomplishes her own designs. Wholely absorbed in vulgar materialistic views, she regards standing merely from the side of the bank-book. Determined to be a despot within her own circle, she imbues the reader with the belief that her despotism must be supreme, because she consistently seeks to achieve an actual advantage, rather than to enforce homage. Her truly personal side comes out more in the sham sentiment in which she delights to indulge; here one finds touches of pettiness, apart from the hypocrisy. In Jenny the designer and despot there is no littleness. This judgment is in conflict

with that which regards her as a caricature.[1] One is not disposed to laugh at Jenny, for one recognises that she is a serious type more worthy of analysis than of ridicule. Indeed, she is not really even vain; her carriage and her jewellery are merely parts of a definite system. Her speech is a further proof that she is a thoroughly coherent character. Where it is not requisite to bully, she does not do so; neither does she frame her thoughts to the injury of people's feelings. Her vocabulary, if lacking the mark of education, is, apart from her sentimentalities, eminently sensible. Throughout, however, her speech is coloured by her unshakable belief in herself; this is especially marked in the short and sharp way in which she hits off anything falling outside the range of her own ideas. One finds her speaking in this way :—

'And Helene knows him too. That is like the Hamburgers; they know all the English. And if they do not know them, they pretend to. I can't understand it.'—I., 8.

The speech of the plutocrat Treibel himself does not carry such full conviction of his own importance with it, but it achieves another distinction. Treibel is always trying to induce his hearers to credit him, not always without reason, with being a smart man with his tongue. Hence the unexplained allusions and the pretentious words which pass his lips; hence also a certain bravado in the ordering of his speech and in the choice of illustration. Nevertheless, Treibel seems to speak always—or almost always—with a curled lip, whereby the joviality

[1] R. M. Meyer in *Die Deutsche Literatur des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts.*

of his manner acquires a strange colouring, without being transformed at any time into bitterness. The man himself, moreover, is not all of a piece. A successful business man aiming at continued business advance, he yet has shadowy ideas of being something more. Keeping and enjoying a good table, he remains a critic, a critic of himself and others. His humour is ironical, and in company with Briest in *Effi Briest*, he is addicted to utterances with double meanings. His liberal tendencies are in agreement with the kindliness of heart which business competition has not destroyed; as he is not actually coarse in his manner, so he is above that mere ostentation which marks the crudest form of plutocrat. But the seeds that come to maturity in Leopold may be seen also in the father. He differs from his wife only in those things that she considers beneath her attention, where, accordingly, he is not called upon to make a stand for his opinions. Even apart from his wife, a narrow-minded but insistent person such as Vogelsang is able to exercise control over him.

The schoolmaster, Willibald Schmidt, whose name would appear to point to a rather peculiar specimen of the average man, has affinities with both Jenny and Treibel. Like Treibel, he is fond of drawing attention to his own smartness, while like Jenny he is given to romancing, although, unlike Jenny, he can also laugh at himself. Even his passion for antiquities is supported by a very comfortable material existence. He would never convince one of anything, and in the long run he would probably become boring, however far off that consummation may appear. It is in this that one may

see much of the likeness that exists between the creator and the created, between Theodor Fontane and Willibald Schmidt. He has epicurean tendencies on a modest basis, and is fond of bemoaning his dreary and weary lot as a teacher of youth. He will miss no opportunity of recounting an anecdote, and affects a half-mocking graciousness of manner; yet he can pass a sane judgment upon a practical matter. Without any fixed beliefs, he never relapses into gloom, and never lays the evils of society solely upon one particular class. Neither does he despair of those evils, believing apparently that most things will come right in the end. His speech is in consonance with these points of character. Well informed, Schmidt verges occasionally on, but never actually touches the pedantic. Yet despite its ironical humour and its pleasing ease, his language is fittingly not without a pedagogic tinge. It may be seen to advantage, from the point of view of its chief excellences, in the following passage taken from the scene in Schmidt's house, when Jenny calls to demand an explanation of Leopold's engagement :—

'You called, Papa?'

'Yes, Corinna, I did. But, before we go further, take a chair and place yourself at some distance from us. I should like to make it obvious to the eye also, that for the present you are a prisoner at the bar. Go into the window corner, we can see you best there. And now tell me, is it true that yesterday evening in the Grünewald you, with all the aristocratic insolence of a born Schmidt, robbed of his chief possession the citizen Leopold Treibel, proceeding peaceably and unarmed upon his way?'—XIII., 193.

In drawing Corinna, Fontane has not maintained the standard of the three preceding characters. Corinna is not consistent. It has already been seen that her marriage with Marcell is highly improbable. Then the taste she displays at the Treibel dinner [1] lies quite beyond the habitual independence of her attitude. In her speech one recognises how she strives to make weapons of the very gifts her father uses only as foils. Schmidt's keen, yet indulgent criticism, amounts in the daughter almost to effrontery; and the former's self-appreciation becomes in the latter somewhat brazen. Despite the conversations with Frau Schmolke, introduced to illustrate her softer side, no one will think this very self-possessed and designing young woman a lovable character. Despite her father's admiration, no one will envy Marcell, for no one can be sure of her goodness of heart. One finds in her, as her name in a way suggests, something which corresponds in a rather debased manner to Schmidt's own whim of being different from others.

The minor characters offer a striking contrast to the unsuccessful company in *L'Adultera*. All are well suggested. Distelkamp, the retired head master of mature sagacity; Marcell, the young schoolmaster of serious disposition; Vogelsang, the cross between the common adventurer and the political fanatic—all these could with ease be filled out into intelligible and consistent characters. Over against them stand Frau Schmolke, the chatty, good-natured housekeeper in whose imagination the deceased policeman, her husband, has become almost beatified; Helene Treibel, with her

[1] In Ch. III.

fixed idea of the blessings of cleanliness and her equally fixed determination to rule her husband; and Fräulein Honig, the governess, intelligent, but disappointed, and not so bitter as she would be if it were not for her fear of snubs. The still more subsidiary characters from Leopold downwards can be accepted without comment, with the possible exception of Mr Nelson, a rather uncertain sketch of a young Englishman.

As in several other of his novels, Fontane leads up to the opening scene by an exterior description of a dwelling.[1] As the main interest of the scenes lies throughout in the conversation, it is not surprising to find scenes which precede, include, and follow a meal, forming of themselves a series, almost detachable from the others. This is made definite by the insistence laid on one or two characters, while others remain shadowy. Although the nearest approaches to the dramatic are to be found where Leopold announces his engagement to his mother,[2] and where Jenny makes her counter declaration to the Schmidts,[3] the scenes are never so prolonged as to suggest tediousness. As usual the group scenes of a social nature are dealt with in a somewhat impressionistic manner; but the Treibel dinner scene is given in as broad detail as will be found anywhere in the novels. In those scenes where only one character appears, true monologues are wanting. Although the author never allows them to become properly sentimental, all the scenes appear to illustrate a softness towards

[1] But this is much more lightly done here than, for example, in *Effi Briest*.

[2] Ch. XII. [3] Ch. XIII.

human failings and towards the pointlessness of most human action. At the same time the all-pervading irony never turns into broad comedy.

The general setting is Berlin and its environs, without the shadowy additions employed in *L'Adultera*. Incidentally, one finds indoor and outdoor settings, but another difference from *L'Adultera* lies in the very sparing use of veranda or balcony. In a broad sense the indoor settings contrast Treibel's house with that of his son Otto, and with that of Schmidt; but the contrasts are by no means fully carried through. The setting of the social scenes shows no variation from Fontane's usual lack of precision. There is a fair impression of Treibel's garden, but one learns little of the town streets and very little more of the country beyond. On reflection, one realises that Fontane pays here even less attention than usual to the setting.

It may seem strange that, although it will meet with sufficient success every particular test of proportion, *Frau Jenny Treibel* leaves the reader dissatisfied with its construction. Despite the supreme importance of the conversation, even the proportion of reflection to speech is better maintained than in some other of the novels. The whole comedy of manners has a sufficient psychological basis to preserve it from appearing artificial or unreal. But as the compass of the work grows, its weight and depth fail; there is no true correspondence between what is realised and what is expected.

The title, *Frau Jenny Treibel*, and the sub-title, *Wo sich Herz zu Herzen find't*, are both well chosen. If at one point Treibel himself seems to become the main

centre of interest, Jenny undoubtedly remains the dominating force throughout; while the mock sentimental, indicated in the sub-title, is never entirely absent. The title, *L'Adultera*, is also a good choice. It points directly to the chief issue in the novel, and indicates also, if Tintoretto's picture be kept in mind, the manner of its treatment. While the chapters in *Frau Jenny Treibel* are merely numbered, in *L'Adultera* they carry headings. These headings appear at times a little over simple,[1] but in some sense they are indicative of the contents. In both novels the chapters are of a fair uniform length, but whereas those that differ sensibly from the average do so in *L'Adultera* on the side of shortness, they do so in *Frau Jenny Treibel* on the side of length.[2] The latter variation is not frequent in Fontane's novels. Again, in *Frau Jenny Treibel* chapters do not correspond to scenes, while in *L'Adultera* chapters and single scenes show a distinct tendency to fall together. In both these novels the chapters run, to a great extent, in definitely connected series, each series being a separate link in the chain that forms the whole novel.[3] Again, in both novels the dramatic ending to a chapter is not sought, neither does the author use the concluding lines of the chapter to point forward. The endings partake most frequently of the nature of colourless transitions. Chapter XIX. of *L'Adultera* ends and

[1] Cf. *Bei Tisch*; *Auf dem Heimweg*.

[2] The short chapters V. and XV. show, however, that there is no strict method.

[3] Examples of such series are: in *Frau Jenny Treibel*, II., III., IV., and V.; IX., X., and XI.; XIV., XV., and XVI.; in *L'Adultera*, IV., V., and VI.; VIII., IX., and X.

Chapter XX. begins with the same words, a device to emphasise the situation, which is strange in Fontane.[1] Finally it may be observed that the author seeks to temper even an occasional symbolic ending by the addition of a few words of no consequence.[2] Asterisks are used in both novels to sub-divide chapters; but in *L'Adultera* the use is infrequent. In *Frau Jenny Treibel*, where asterisk divisions are used throughout, some definite reason may at times be attached to their introduction;[3] in the greater number of instances, however, the author is merely seeking to avoid beginning a new chapter.

Letters occur in both novels. They are of value chiefly in helping to expose the character of the particular letter-writer, at the same time indicating to some extent the position of affairs.[4] The author attempts a mixture of this kind of letter with the travel letter.[5] There are also examples of those brief notes which

[1] Ch. XIX. ends: And then he got up, kissed her, and said, 'Cheer up, dear!' Ch. XX. begins: 'Cheer up, dear!' Rubehn had called to Melanie, and she wanted to follow the call.

[2] An excellent example is afforded by the ending of Ch. V. of *Frau Jenny Treibel.*

[3] Thus the second use of asterisks in Ch. II. marks the division between Treibel communing with himself and Treibel acting before his friends. In Ch. X. five divisions mark the groups into which the picnic party has fallen, and so help to preserve a union within disunion.

[4] Good examples are in *Frau Jenny Treibel*, the letter from Jenny to Hildegard, Ch. XIII., 184 ff.; that from Marcell to Corinna, Ch. XVI., 221-2; in *L'Adultera*, that from Jacobine to Melanie, Ch. XIX., 139 ff.

[5] In *L'Adultera*, the letter from Melanie in Italy to Jacobine, Ch. XVII., 125 ff.

Fontane introduces into his novels for the purpose of avoiding prolonged explanations.[1] Although very little verse is to be found in either novel, Jenny's song which is twice given is admirably conceived to aid in surrounding[2] that lady with an atmosphere of false sentiment.

It is indicative of the manner in which Fontane approached his subject that there is no intervention on the part of the author in either novel, neither does he anywhere take the reader into his confidence.

Both novels make the exposition of character very independent of incident,[3] but in this connection differences also fall to be recorded. Thus, in *L'Adultera*, the author's remarks are frequently of importance; indeed, the opening chapter is in itself a series of remarks by the author. In *Frau Jenny Treibel*, on the other hand, author's remarks are almost entirely negligible. Again, in *L'Adultera* direct psychological analysis is uncommon, and where used is unimpressive; but in *Frau Jenny Treibel* it is more frequent than in many of the novels.[4] The remarks which the characters make upon one another

[1] Cf. in *L'Adultera*, that from Rubehn's father, Ch. XXI., 158; in *Frau Jenny Treibel*, that from Jenny to Schmidt, Ch. XII., 190.

[2] In Ch. IV., 56, and Ch. XVI., 232.

[3] The incident in *L'Adultera* of Melanie slipping away without saying good-bye to her children is an incident designed to be effective, which, however, fails of its effect; the same may be said of her later meeting with her children.

[4] It should be noted that there is direct psychological analysis of Jenny in Ch. I., whereas Fontane generally does not introduce it till later; while considering the unimportance of the character it is perhaps carried too far in the case of Leopold, particularly in Ch. VIII.

are of importance in both novels;[1] while in *Frau Jenny Treibel* those which Schmidt passes upon himself cannot be overlooked.

In general, there is a remarkable difference between the style of *L'Adultera* and that of *Frau Jenny Treibel*. That of the former is strained. One does not notice either the sureness of touch displayed in *Schach von Wuthenow* or the strength proceeding from the knowledge that each word is the right word, as in *Grete Minde*. By this is not meant that fundamental errors as of inadequacy or unsuitability are committed; such errors are always foreign to Fontane. But the attempt to ensure smartness and pointedness of expression remains too obvious, however near it may approach to success; the selective method conveys no impression of naturalness or inevitability. Judging from *L'Adultera* one would say that this is an author who ought, in happier mood, to write a pleasing style. *Frau Jenny Treibel* shows the author in happier mood; the improvement in the style is immediately evident. The writing is clear and incisive, never lagging, and always in keeping with the subject. Nevertheless, it does not consistently avoid a certain air of artificiality, due perhaps to the author's determination to insist on the contrast between the two circles. In the intermixture of short and long paragraphs and sentences both novels are in agreement. *L'Adultera* differs from *Frau Jenny Treibel* in the presence of occasional scraps of dialect and Berlin jargon. Van der Straaten's speech

[1] On account of their remarks on the chief characters, such minor characters as Fräulein von Sawatzki in *L'Adultera*, and Frau Schmolke in *Frau Jenny Treibel*, attain to a certain distinction.

is coloured by an odd slang phrase.[1] While the long forced words occurring in *Frau Jenny Treibel* may be accepted as necessary to the character of Treibel,[2] in *L'Adultera* they accomplish little beyond the marring of the style.[3] *Frau Jenny Treibel* is marked by many unnecessary foreign words, even when due account of the *milieu* is taken. Of these, by far greater numbers come from French than from any other language. Latin borrowings come next in number; but there are more than usual from English. Stray words from Spanish, Italian, and Greek complete the list. In *L'Adultera* Latin borrowings are more numerous; and this novel is also marked by a few desperate hybrids.[4] Strangely enough there is no great use of foreign phrases in either novel, but their absence is particularly patent in *L'Adultera*.[5] While verbless sentences amount in *L'Adultera* almost to a mannerism, they are not frequent in *Frau Jenny Treibel*. Consequent upon the atmosphere obtaining, the proverb is to be found in *L'Adultera* and the epigram in *Frau Jenny Treibel*. The latter is further

[1] So, noticeably: *alles Jacke*.

[2] Cf. *Sprechanismus, Laternenansteckerstil, Zirkelquadratur-und-Perpetuummobilesucher*.

[3] Cf. *Dschingiskhanartiges, Durchschnittsheldengeschichte, Staatsstreichlich-Hochverräterisches, Dragonerreserveleutnants-Allüren*.

[4] Cf. *Carrièremacher, Steuerdefraudant, Steeplechase-Reiter*.

[5] In *Frau Jenny Treibel* one finds such French phrases as *à tout prix, en miniature*, while the paucity of Latin tags in a company of schoolmasters argues lack of information on the part of the author. Fontane's favourite, *lupus in fabula*, is, however, not wanting. There is nothing to call for comment in the scraps of English connected with Mr Nelson.

characterised by the frequent and skilful use of parentheses, of which the following may serve as an example. The words are spoken by Frau Jenny herself, the parentheses marking her character :—

'And I have kept to this day a few poems which were addressed to me. And when I am heavy at heart, I take the little book, which originally had a blue cardboard cover (but which I have now had bound in green morocco), and sit down at the window, and look out at the garden, and have my cry out all to myself, so that no one sees me, least of all Treibel or the children.'—I., 7.

The rhetorical question occurs with much greater frequency in *L'Adultera* than in *Frau Jenny Treibel.*[1] Again unfinished sentences, mechanically indicated by dots, are frequent in both novels, but are more noticeable in the second, where indeed they tend by their liberal employment to defeat the author's aim.[2]

With regard to the men and women whose habits and attitude to life form by far the greater part of the subject-matter, the novels offer points of agreement and disagreement. In each case one has a business man and his circle, but in *L'Adultera* one meets an established family, in *Frau Jenny Treibel* parvenus. In a sense, also, the circle in the former novel is wider, so much room being occupied in the latter by the schoolmaster group. The component parts of these circles are not so much

[1] Indeed, as it is employed by every one from Van der Straaten to his gardener, Kagelmann, it loses much of its effectiveness.

[2] In conclusion, a curious usage may be mentioned in Ch. I., 4–5, where Van der Straaten's reasons for not being connected with the Jewish family in Gutzkow's *Uriel Acosta* are numbered.

studied in and for themselves, as for the light they throw on the principal characters.[1] While the children in both novels need not be taken into account, it must be remarked that in *L'Adultera* the younger, in *Frau Jenny Treibel* the older, of the chief characters demand the most attention. An analysis of the conversation will show that in neither novel does any subject ever threaten the predominance of the character study. Animate nature is almost entirely neglected;[2] while inanimate nature receives but little attention, much less than is usually the case in Fontane. Even the flowers seem to be forgotten. The excursion district of Halensee remains as shadowy in *Frau Jenny Treibel* as does that of Stralau in *L'Adultera*. The introduction of the palm-house in the latter novel is for symbolic purposes of a somewhat crude form. *L'Adultera* offers a few trifling observations on one or two of the old masters, as also on Wagner, while in *Frau Jenny Treibel* there is a little talk on Herwegh and Heyse. In the latter novel again more is made of politics than is usual with Fontane, although it would be difficult to deduce any settled views from the reflections of Treibel. The question of school discipline is discussed here by the schoolmaster group, while the subject of food is not forgotten.[3] The introduction of topics not connected with the characters

[1] The introduction of a police official in *L'Adultera* seems foreign to Fontane.

[2] It may be noticed incidentally that a cockatoo appears in both novels, there being in *Frau Jenny Treibel* some mention of its habits.

[3] Cf. especially Schmidt's disquisition on crab and lobster, in Ch. VIII.

in anecdotal form is below the average of frequency for Fontane's novels.

Despite the fact that the author has embodied many of his own characteristics in Willibald Schmidt, there is nothing of any importance connected with his personal history to be found in either novel. It goes without saying that he is dealing with life in the city, where the greater proportion of his days were spent. Further, as has already been noted, the plot of *L'Adultera* is taken from an actual episode in Berlin society. The insignificant part which the Church plays in the life of the characters is a certain mark of the age. As regards the author's personal attitude to his time and country, much lies below Schmidt's exclamation to his daughter :—

'Corinna, if I were not a professor, I should become a Social Democrat in the end.'—XIII., 198.

The attitude suggested here is more fully developed, although not exactly on these lines, in *Der Stechlin.*

The survey of the subject-matter has made it clear that the novelist has a liberal interest in the thought and conduct of adults; apparently he considers their exterior appearance and the clothing they choose of little significance.[1] In no case, however, will he be brought to take life with strict seriousness. Believing that fighting against the tide profits a man little, he prefers to cover

[1] Yet he can go into such things in minor characters, where, presumably, he considers them more in place. Cf. Vogelsang and Nelson in *Frau Jenny Treibel.*

his weaknesses by adopting a semi-flippant tone.[1] If he cannot wholly evade taking something in earnest, he suggests that that something should not be of actual and practical moment.[2] He seeks for humour in events, and good-fellowship in those around him; and he has no taste for moralising on the gloomy side of human existence. But although unwilling to search for the explanation of what is hidden, he holds that experience brings knowledge in details he has a certain satisfaction in displaying. The following is typical of these generalisations :—

In common with almost all rich families the Van der Straatens also had a following of quite old or elderly ladies who received presents at Christmas and were invited, in the course of the year, to afternoon tea and picnics.—*L'Adultera*, VII., 47.

Yet if his tolerance is the outcome in part of an ironical indifference, it must be admitted that he desires people to appreciate life. Nor is he forgetful that its drabness may be relieved in many ways. His liking for one particular touch of colour finds vent in *L'Adultera*, when Melanie says to an old friend of aristocratic birth :—

'Tell me your full name and title. I like so much to hear it, and I always forget it again.'

[1] This tone occasions a reproof from E. Schmidt in *Charakteristiken II.* The real fault, however, lies in the fact that the tone of the concluding chapters is not logically evolved from that of the major portion of the novel.

[2] So Schmidt remains absorbed in the question as to whether a death-mask belongs to Atreus, his father, or his uncle.

'Aloysia Friederike Sawat von Sawatzki, genannt Sattler von der Hölle, Stifts-Anwärterin auf Kloster Himmelpfort in der Uckermark.'

'Beautiful,' said Melanie, 'how I wish I had a name like that!'—VII., 49.[1]

To an all-pervading enthusiasm for any of the ornaments of life he does not, however, attain. On the whole, one obtains from both novels the picture of a sophisticated, but rather genial elderly man, who must plead guilty to a fondness for offering conversational curiosities in which he sometimes repeats himself. Throughout *Frau Jenny Treibel* and in a great part of *L'Adultera* there is nothing suggestive of loftiness in the aim or accomplishment of life, but the conclusion of the latter novel points to one ideal. It is the ideal of true love between man and woman, which is in itself the most splendid treasure mortals may find.

Apart from the skill with which the style, a style sure to arouse attention, is maintained, the outstanding merit of *Frau Jenny Treibel* is undoubtedly the character portrayal. The distinctness with which the characters stand out from one another in the memory is abundant proof of their accuracy and likeness to life. The only truly excellent thing in *L'Adultera* falls in the same category: it is the portrait of Van der Straaten.

[1] The whole title is purposely left in the original.

CHAPTER VI

Unequal Marriages, I.: *Graf Petöfy; Cécile*

In contradistinction to the two novels dealt with in the preceding chapter, *Graf Petöfy* is unconnected with the life of the Prussian capital. It is, however, so far related to *L'Adultera* that it deals with the relations between a woman and two men. In it Fontane aims at showing that young should not mate with old. Even with the best intentions and fair-mindedness on both sides, the marriage of Franziska and Petöfy is foredoomed to failure. At the same time he seems to desire to contradict the conclusions with regard to human passion at which he arrived in *Ellernklipp*. If the growth of love between man and woman, Egon and Franziska, cannot in itself be stunted by moral or conventional barriers, yet a strong nature, such as Franziska, can resist its final appeal, if this should appear contrary to personal honour. Further, there is an attempt at depicting the life of a great Hungarian nobleman, at home and in Vienna.

Fontane succeeds in the most artistic manner in bringing the reader to believe that the marriage between Franziska and Petöfy cannot happily continue. Although pessimistic suggestions find a place, he does not rely on continual gloomy forebodings, but rather by arraying

all the chances optimism might suggest and leaving the reader to perceive that the reasons are superficial, postulate many things that cannot be guaranteed, and ignore the possibility of the root principles of human nature being touched. Such a marriage as Franziska contracts is the most likely to expose her to the power of those elementary passions above which she chooses to think she rises. But even apart from this, no one but an automaton or an utter nincompoop could always lead the life to which Franziska condemns herself. It is an artificial arrangement that is durable only so long as it is unattacked, either directly or indirectly, by Egon's mere presence. Unable to prevent herself from loving Egon, Franziska is able to restrain the impulse on her husband's death : she opposes to it a sense of honouring the dead, and the ability to give her life a content in the work she can achieve as the dowager Countess. One is not able to criticise the truth of the position, but one recognises that there is a qualification on the degree of restraint which Franziska is called upon to exercise over herself. There is nothing to disprove the suspicion that, under the same conditions, almost any young man would have appealed to her emotions. Consequently the strictly personal attachment to Egon may not be so strong as the author would have the reader believe.

Fontane fails to give an adequate idea of the life of a man of Petöfy's class. As one might expect, he does better when his hero is in Vienna than when he is on his Hungarian estate. In both cases the work is too conscious, but in the latter it becomes at times plainly mechanical. And the colouring is never all of a kind,

despite the author's pains to preserve a strictly realistic brush.

The actual plot presents no complications; it is thoroughly consequent and wholly unexaggerated. An old Hungarian noble, Count Petöfy, a theatre enthusiast and man of the world, grows tired of exerting himself in the search for pleasure, and determines to keep it by his side in the person of a young Prussian actress, Franziska Franz. Despite the opposition of his widowed and pious sister, he proposes to the actress. Franziska, who is rather attracted to the old Count, and who considers herself above emotional sentimentalism, accepts him. They marry, spend a short honeymoon in Italy, and settle down on the estate in Hungary. As the whole occupation there lies in the effort to pass the time pleasantly, Franziska grows weary. The Count's sister, Judith, and his nephew, Count Egon, pay a visit to the castle. A mutual affection arises between Franziska and Egon. As the old people become restive, a return is made to Vienna. Accidently, Petöfy discovers that Franziska has given the ring she wore as a girl to Egon. Unwilling to stand in the way of the young people's happiness, he commits suicide. Franziska, however, assures the Countess Judith that should Egon ask her hand in marriage she will refuse it. The author achieves a certain suspense at the outset by not introducing Franziska to the reader the first time in Petöfy's residence. As in *L'Adultera,* occasional symbolic touches are added for strength.[1]

It is difficult to class anything as wholly extraneous

[1] Cf. the ending to Ch. IV.

matter. Every effort must first be made to ascertain if it does not in some way aid in the exposition of character. The introduction of the work-girls at the beginning seems uncalled for, as they are not made use of throughout.[1] At first sight also the appearance of the actress Phemi La Grange at Oeslau may be thought awkward and unnecessary, more especially as Hannah, to whom the author returns, offers a better contrast to Franziska. In fact the scenes at Oeslau on the whole remain rather weak. Yet closer examination reveals the fact that they are not without point. Although it will be admitted that too much time is spent at Oeslau, it cannot be asserted that with regard to character, exposition, and development this time is wholly lost. One witnesses here the differences existent between Franziska and a typical, unalterable actress, and grows conscious of the feasibility of her deserting the theatre. With the departure of Phemi, there is a marked change in the atmosphere. Again the incident of the loss of Toldy's child is in itself a mere interpolation; yet it serves to illustrate the views Franziska has come to hold on the common joys of humanity, and to bring to a head her slumbering passion and womanly feeling.

Excluding the children who in themselves are of no significance, the characters can be divided into four groups: aristocrats, clerics, actresses, servants. On the point of age there are wide differences.

Count Adam Petöfy is a well-founded character,

[1] Some plan of using them in this way must have been in Fontane's mind when he termed them the 'chorus of the House of Petöfy.'

drawn with considerable skill. His military career nipped in the bud by the Hungarian revolt of 1849, he has never seriously embarked upon any other, choosing rather to make his life as pleasurable as possible. In this he is perfectly frank. He directs his attention to the theatre and more particularly to the leading actresses. Somewhat cynical, he is too indifferent to become bitter. Something of a wit, he is fond of bright conversation and good company. He has a good heart, good principles, but naturally unsettled ways. A moralist would probably brand him as thoroughly selfish; yet in his attempt to win Franziska he remains unhypocritical and unswervingly straightforward. To his mind, he makes a bargain satisfactory to both sides. The reader may think it somewhat extravagant in a man of seventy to be a theatre enthusiast, but he will look in vain for signs of real folly. And it would be an unenviable task, in any case, to belittle a man who, conceiving that he stands between his wife and happiness, crowns his ideas of gallantry by taking his own life. He uses language in consonance with his character: sometimes a series of short, pointed sentences full of assurance, sometimes a tentative flow of suggestions.[1] His vocabulary is crowded with foreign words and he favours exclamations. While straining to be different from others, he gives turns to his speech and uses illustrative phrases which can best be described as far-fetched.

The manner of her speech at once demonstrates the great difference between Franziska and Petöfy. It is

[1] This latter manner most markedly in his talks with his sister or with himself.

downright, and does not suggest a continuous effort to be smart. There is perhaps something too mechanical in the reiteration of '*Heimat*' and '*Sehnsucht*,' but it remains nevertheless typically German. And Fontane does not fail in differentiating her speech from that of the Viennese. Where she is not relating something that arouses her emotions, she speaks with a lack of grace which is condoned by her sincerity. Franziska is a comedy actress, but she has a rather more serious outlook than most of her sisters. Neither prudish nor wanton, she commands always a certain respect which increases on closer acquaintance. She is definitely North German in her desire to learn; she reads and observes. North German also is the restraint she imposes on her feelings. Not believing in the Church, she cannot free herself wholly from the influence of signs and omens. It is feasible, accordingly, that she may seek the atmosphere which seems necessary to her in the Roman Catholic Church. Always a seeker after a solid basis on which to build her life, she is never a scoffer, not even at the ordinary human failings above which she holds herself to stand. And if one rather smiles at the actress who considers her little affairs of the theatre world a guide to the depth and power of sentiment, one must also admit that this long cherishing of this definite belief with regard to herself helps to make possible and strengthen the resolve to play her dignified rôle on the Count's death. The character is convincingly lifelike and exhibits marked care in the study and suggestion of the mental attitude. It remains consequent throughout, even if one suspects a little admixture of the genuine

actress at the close, and especially so in the most important matter, the gradual development of her deeper feelings.

There is something suggestive about the name Judith von Gundolskirchen, although it cannot be said to be forced. The important thing about the Countess is her fervid faith in, and attachment to, the Roman Catholic Church, to which she is very generous. Yet she is both warm and large-hearted, and quite lacking in confessional hatred. Neither has her devotion to religious observances destroyed her understanding of the worldly members of her circle. Again, she has no theoretical boundaries to her conduct, and will attend the theatre when she chooses. Her interference in affairs invariably displays her wisdom; but she does not set up as an unimpeachable authority. An excellent figure as she stands, representing the union of piety with intelligence, Fontane has added those few touches which transform her into an individual character. So one learns of her use of the hotel servants to supply the place of the lackeys whom fashion demands, when she leaves her cards with the actresses at Oeslau. And one reads her remark anent her nephew and his friend in her letter to Pater Fessler :—

> A young actress or two is of more lively interest than an aunt of nearly seventy.—VIII., 68.

Her language is quite in keeping with her character. At times equally direct with that of Franziska, it is quietly confident and carries the charm of repose.

Fittingly she does not speak for effect, and does not employ the stock of foreign words with which her brother embroiders his remarks.

Count Egon Asperg is a fairly telling sketch of a young Austrian officer who likes the gay life and the sporting round, but who has better qualities below those that generally come to light. Of a kindly nature, he is modest in his attitude to his elders, and of a true gentlemanly disposition. In conformity with these characteristics his speech is reasonable, but gives rise to no definite comment.

The other characters with whom some success is achieved are Pater Fessler and Franziska's maid, Hannah, but in both cases there is a distinct tendency to type. The priest is sure of himself, liberal minded, with excellent manners; he shows, just by his lack of stiffness, his ability to preserve his own dignity and that of the institution he serves under all circumstances. His speech is illustrative of this by the manner in which he throws in, as it were at random, an occasional weighty sentence. There are three important ingredients in the character of Hannah : her Protestantism, her unshakable belief in the superiority of the North German, and her attachment to her mistress. Then she is not given to dangerous optimism, and does not speak save when pressed. That she should a little despise her more vacillating mistress lies in the tradition of such characters.

The remaining subsidiary characters are unsuccessful. Fontane would appear to have lost the power of suggestion, and one finds him frequently falling back on mere

blunt statement. One might be inclined to attribute this in a measure to an original lack of completeness in the apprehension of the part the characters were to play, but it applies also to the actress Phemi La Grange, to whom a fair space is devoted.

The scenes vary from group scenes to scenes with one;[1] as usual in Fontane, scenes with three are exceedingly rare. The action in the group scenes is often not clearly indicated.[2] Irrespective of the number of characters engaged, the scenes are but very rarely dramatic; and where a dramatic situation arises the author makes no attempt to drain it of its full possibilities.[3] Nevertheless the scenes are not too protracted, as they are liable to become in the hands of a less accomplished novelist who places very great weight on the conversation. No artificial connection by one character appearing in all scenes is attempted; and, in general, there are obvious time intervals between one scene and another.

The setting in general is to be found in Vienna, in Oeslau, and in Hungary. As regards the indoor settings, the contrast is practically restricted to lie between those in Vienna and those in Hungary. The incidental settings, more particularly those of the indoor class, are

[1] Where either Franziska or Petöfy appears, monologue not always being introduced.

[2] For comparison in clearness of detail, examples may be taken from the following which rise in order of clearness: Franziska, Petöfy, and the three nobles at dinner in the castle; Petöfy's funeral scene; the Countess Judith's private receptions.

[3] As particularly when Petöfy discovers Franziska's ring in Egon's possession.

never wholly distinct; frequently they consist of a mere suggestion, and at times are totally disregarded. The outdoor settings are never given in a manner akin to that of a poet; on the other hand they are not employed as mere padding. Veranda settings occur. The outline settings at times grow unpleasant through their sameness of type. No effort is made to force attention upon a poor scene by a falsely arresting setting.

The disproportionateness of *Graf Petöfy* is mainly to be accounted for by the undue prominence of speech. One obtains the impression that the characters are always talking, most space being claimed for a definite interchange of opinions. Thus the proper proportion of speech to action and of speech to reflection is lost; and this judgment is only slightly qualified by recognising that the characters are supposed to be given to talk. At times again a tendency to introduce overmuch reported action becomes apparent, although much of what is reported has some actual bearing upon the characters. Everything is presented in such subdued tones, that one is inclined to hesitate in the application of the terms tragedy and comedy. Yet, if the fundamental tone be taken as tragical, it is undoubtedly well relieved by the light tone which is introduced at fitting intervals. Indeed, postulating a fitting lowering in degree in the sense of the terms, one concludes that in this novel the proportion best maintained is that of tragedy to comedy.

In *Cécile*, Fontane desires to establish the principle that there can be no set measure by which to judge human conduct. Each person must be considered strictly as an

individual, not merely as one of a class: thus Cécile is not to be condemned out of hand as a woman with a tainted past, but the circumstances of her case have carefully and thoroughly to be investigated. The reader is to carry away from the novel a full belief in the justness of the injunction 'Judge not!' Thus the author himself does not set up one class as better than another, or seek to show that any particular circle is wholly good or bad. Nevertheless, he does not desire to cover up existent defects: so he indicates the lack of real principle in the von Zachas and the Welfen-Echingen. But there is something which Fontane adds to his plea for tolerance and forbearance, a teaching, which if it is not pure fatalism, at least proclaims the view that man is to a great extent the helpless victim of circumstances. There would appear to be two further subsidiary but distinct aims in the novel. The first is to impress the reader with the natural beauty of the Harz, the second to interest him in anecdotal history.[1]

The pictures of the Harz, which are constantly recurring, succeed, one is inclined to think, almost in spite of themselves. Despite the author's obvious appreciation of the district, his descriptions retain a rather cut and dried tone, similar in places to that of a guide-book. Yet, if they do not linger in the memory, the skill, and one might almost add the very sparingness with which they are drawn, suffice to ensure the reader's attention and thence his appreciation. In his anecdotal history Fontane does not reach the level he set himself in *Schach von Wuthenow*. No single anecdote is as good as the

[1] The second aim loses in importance as the novel progresses.

average in that novel, while on the whole they seem much more forced. Some are actually boring.[1]

Fontane's manner of telling the story is sufficient in itself to produce a feeling of tolerance in the reader. In consequence, it is less difficult for him to bring the reader to believe that it would be grossly unfair to judge Cécile as one of a class. He does not insist on Cécile's right to a sympathetic judgment, he merely allows that judgment adequate room to form itself. He allows Cécile's behaviour with Hedemeyer to throw difficulties in the way of refraining from condemning her. Some readers will doubtless share with Gordon a certain resentment at her conduct, in as much as the Cécile they think themselves willing to forgive ought not willingly to associate with Hedemeyer. In company with Gordon they commit a great error. Cécile is neither to be forgiven nor condemned, but to be accepted as she is, and understood in the light of her history. Casual spurs to the liberal-mindedness of the reader are offered in the sporadic indications of Cécile's childlike emotions under certain conditions, or in her friendship with the great Newfoundland, Boncœur; but the novelist never puts forward an actual plea. Also, if only by the omission of all bitterness from his conviction that circumstance is the greatest factor in human life, one is brought to feel that forbearance is the first essential in the examination of human conduct. Thus, even in the case of St Arnaud one recognises how exaggerated would be an account of his conduct and character, which was drawn up in

[1] But allowance has to be made for a faithful rendering of the manner of that strange person, Eginhard aus dem Grunde.

ignorance of the manner in which the career he loved had been cut short. Only in one instance, with regard to Hedemeyer, does Fontane seem to contradict his own principle and almost invite the reader to tax the Councillor as a rogue; yet even this single instance naturally establishes a flaw in the conscious tone of the novel.

If the plot is fuller than some others of Fontane, it is by no means complicated. Von Leslie-Gordon, a young engineer who has been absent several years from Germany, is holidaying in the Harz. An elderly man, evidently an ex-officer, arrives at the same hotel with a young wife who is apparently not in very good health. The three become acquainted and spend much time together. Gordon is attracted to the young wife, Cécile, and she to him; St Arnaud, the husband, adopts a tone of light mockery. Gordon writes to his sister to discover the history of the couple. Before a reply comes, he is called away on business. Later he has occasion to take up residence in Berlin, and resumes his footing with the St Arnauds. The mutual attraction grows in strength, although Gordon is not pleased with the St Arnaud circle. The letter from Gordon's sister eventually arriving brings the intimation that Cécile is a woman with a past, and that on her account St Arnaud fought and killed a brother officer, thereafter leaving the service. Nevertheless, Gordon's passion forces him to speak. Cécile begs him to remain merely a friend. At this juncture he is again called away on business; but unluckily, on his return to Berlin, he sees Cécile in the theatre with Hedemeyer, a man whom he detests. He follows the couple to Cécile's home, makes his way in,

upbraids her in the most cruel manner, and takes his departure. St Arnaud, informed of the incident by Hedemeyer, challenges and kills Gordon. Cécile commits suicide.

The plot is well put together, rising in intensity in due proportion to the increase of emotional intensity in the chief characters. It may be objected to it, however, that having regard to the number of persons introduced it centres too exclusively round Cécile and Gordon, there being no sufficient subsidiary action either for contrast or relief.[1] At times accordingly too much is made of Gordon's moods, certainly more than is genuinely necessary. Even allowing for the psychological nature of the work, it is certain that there is overcrowding in the first part. Indeed, one seems at times to be dealing more with the idea of a plot than with a plot itself. Only in the second half, where action is given for Fontane quite considerable scope, does the plot consistently hold the reader. One leaves the book unsatisfied, but not really dissatisfied.

One approaches the question of extraneous matter with much more certainty than is usual in dealing with Fontane's novels. Thus, as far as the main action is concerned, or as far as any light is thrown on the three chief characters, the introduction of the Berlin tourists is quite unnecessary, while that of the retired clergyman, the private scholar, and the old schoolmaster is in no way essential. One may with advantage compare these

[1] It would seem probable that the author introduced the artist, Rosa Hexel, who reappears in Berlin, with an eye to subsidiary interest he failed to develop.

people and the incidents connected with them with the St Arnaud circle in Berlin, rightly introduced to illustrate the atmosphere in which Cécile lives. It is true that the Berlin tourists give to the opening rather a welcome touch of comedy, but once having appeared they ought to have continued to present themselves, at least at irregular intervals.[1] Neither can one regard Rosa Hexel as taking their place, for one is never quite sure of her sincerity. The other persons mentioned merely fill out the excursion parties which the author organises as occasions on which to observe the conduct of Cécile, Gordon, and St Arnaud. Again, the introduction of the business man and his wife does not seem to be justified;[2] one cannot think this is necessary in order to provide Gordon with a second in his duel.[3] Apparently Fontane believed the central characters and action to be insufficient, and attempted, accordingly, to enlarge the scope of the novel. Undoubtedly *Cécile* would have been of greater value if the attempt had not been made.

The characters, amongst whom there are more important men than women, represent varying stages in adult life. Socially they are to be assigned chiefly to the lesser nobility and to the middle classes. The company consists for the most part of professional people of differing types and capacity, including clergymen, who it has been seen were excluded both from *L'Adultera* and *Frau Jenny Treibel.*

[1] Their reappearance in Ch. XVIII. serves merely to allow of the author making some general remarks about Berliners as a whole.

[2] Cf. Gordon's shadowy evening in Charlottenburg, Ch. XVII.

[3] Cf. Ch. XXVIII.

One might incline to consider Cécile St Arnaud uninteresting; there is certainly no temptation to grow enthusiastic over her. Yet it is exactly from the author's success in drawing her that this position arises. Cécile is one of those apparently and in part characterless people who are naturally lacking in interest. Cécile seems to come and go, to live from one day to another without making any impression on her surroundings, and developing personal judgment only on trivial matters. Yet it is from these latter indications that one has to account for her asking Gordon to leave her when he passes the bounds of friendship. Gordon's love for Cécile gives rise to the supposition that she has, or once had, the seeds of a lovable character, seeds to some discernible. Above all easily led, Cécile is only admiring differing types of assurance in St Arnaud, Gordon, Hedemeyer, and Dörffel; indeed, she requires somebody to mould a life she cannot mould for herself. And as she finally places her main, one cannot say her sole confidence in Gordon, her suicide is a natural consequence of his death. Although life has been for her little more than a series of disappointments, one must recognise that there is one grand possibility about her character. Cécile might have been one of those ingenuous but attractive women who grow rapturous over simple pleasures, knowing and caring little about the world and its problems. It is suggested that for a short time after her emerging from childhood she may have actually been such a woman. Moreover, she is sufficiently such a woman to be indifferent to the so-called well-informed conversation that goes on around her; and it is from her

naturally uncritical standpoint that she sees the best even in Hedemeyer, although her experience prevents her being deceived. One is still more inclined to say that the Cécile one meets is not the Cécile that should have been, when one recalls how her thoughts went back at the last to the beliefs and spontaneous joys of her early days.[1] And if Cécile has too great a liking for flattery and homage, one must remember that her spirit was starved of that loving sweetness which would have nourished her finer and more generous qualities. It is fitting that she should speak but little. This comparative silence on her part is indicative of her receptive character.[2] Towards the close when vital issues are at stake she speaks more readily, and the questions which unfailingly mark her former fragmentary conversation become less frequent. Yet the author is guilty at times of allowing her speech too closely to resemble that of Gordon.[3]

One remarks at once that Gordon uses in his speech decisive turns and short sentences, indicative of assurance.[4] His language suggests, not merely through its occasional adornment by French phrases, a certain, if not an extravagant effort after smartness. On the other hand, for a man who has lived in England and in

[1] Cf. her letter to Dörffel, in Ch. XXIX.

[2] Cf. her conversation with the forester's wife, in Ch. XIV.

[3] Cf. Ch. XIII., 318, where Gordon says: 'But pardon me, if my curiosity is making me ask indiscreet questions.' And Cécile replies, 'Not indiscreet. In any case, what is discretion? Whoever wishes to devote himself to that *à tout prix* must enter the Carthusian order.'

[4] Equally so in his monologues.

the States, he makes no flourish of his English. His experience of men and affairs is, however, reflected in the touch of irony that frequently seasons his remarks; yet if he sometimes nears, he never reaches the bounds of propriety. Fontane has undoubtedly succeeded better in reproducing the speech of his character than in portraying the character itself. Less well drawn than Cécile, Gordon is, none the less, more interesting, partly, it will be supposed, because he is the main mover in the central action. Considering the conditions under which he first sees Cécile, there appears to be something forced in the theory that he is immediately attracted to her, unless one is to suppose that she is the first woman he has spoken to since his return home after an absence of seven years. Nothing, however, leads to this supposition, and Cécile is in no way typical of the Germany of which he is so proud and to which he is so attached. There seems to be, then, no adequate sympathetic preparation for his attachment to Cécile, and nothing is gained by the few suggestions as to his former life given by St Arnaud to his wife. It looks as if Gordon were instigated more by a certain self-sufficiency, by a belief that he must be liked by any woman, and by a desire to show St Arnaud that he does not make the most or the best of Cécile. One inclines to agree with St Arnaud when he says of Gordon :—

'Indeed, he acts as if he had legitimate rights to assert pretension upon pretension.'—XXVII., 442.

But as the Colonel himself recognises there is another

side to Gordon's character which must not be overlooked.[1] If he cannot be cleared of presumption, he does not boast; for he considers boasting in a man of his worth and experience merely crude. Again, he has finer points in conduct as well as in personal manner. Yet, despite this admission, the critic will claim that the author has failed to complete his character, unless it was his design to leave the character not wholly intelligible. The final impression received is certainly that Gordon is much of an actor. He strives to appear a man with a serene cast of mind, not subject to momentary caprice, but he is not what he would appear. Neither has he that grip of situations and of himself which he is careful to assume. His final outburst is only the truth breaking through the sham restraint of his feelings. And one is greatly tempted to make no account of his repentance, being suspicious that it is only an actor's final touch.

St Arnaud is undoubtedly 'very much a Colonel of the Guards *comme il faut*.'[2] Accordingly, he carries an air of superiority differing from that of Gordon, not so much in an incipient arrogance as in its condescension.[3] His career cut short, he is not greatly attached to life, but not therefore determined to abandon it. In consequence he is not seen at his best; while his tendency to a spontaneous gallantry cannot be denied. Fontane is more successful than with the two previous characters in his presentation of this amateur of hazards—in war, in duelling, in gambling. There is one thing that

[1] Cf. St Arnaud's remarks to his wife, in Ch. X.

[2] As Gordon reflects in Ch. II., 243.

[3] Cf. the undertone of his talk with the schoolmaster in Ch. XIV.

St Arnaud never leaves to chance, the settlement of a question; there he is always right. The views of others are not worth examining. The following extract from his conversation with Cécile regarding Gordon's conduct affords an excellent illustration of his temperament :—

(*Cécile*) 'What happened on that day cannot have altered him, but immediately afterwards certain things must have come to his knowledge, I do not need to tell you what, which changed his tone and demeanour.'
(*St Arnaud*) 'Miserable. Infamous.'
(*Cécile*) 'No, Pierre.'
(*St Arnaud*) 'Very well. Go on.'—XXVII., 442.

Indeed, St Arnaud's manner of speaking is admirably managed throughout; from it one even obtains the idea that there is something unpleasant about the Colonel, which he is, however, able to prevent from reaching the light. It is rightly reminiscent of the parade ground, and lacks nothing in professional forcefulness. Yet it possesses sufficient colouring to preserve its personal, as against typical character.

The names of the principal characters strike one as having been indiscreetly chosen. Cécile von Zacha (to take the heroine's maiden name), Robert von Leslie-Gordon, Pierre von St Arnaud seem to point either to romanticism or to social satire; while such a name as Eginhard aus dem Grunde undoubtedly sets the pointer in the latter direction.

Not one of the other characters is fully developed. Rosa Hexel is fuller than the others, but the author makes little attempt to deal with things beyond the

superficial part of her character. One recognises that she dislikes restraint, but is without conceit as to her artistic abilities. A degree of modest effrontery is successfully introduced into her speech.

The private scholar, Eginhard aus dem Grunde, is to all intents and purposes little short of a caricature. Fontane might easily have dispensed with him, even if he had smuggled in the historical tattle through some other channel. A character that is obviously boring has no claim to inclusion, save if it is honestly developed; and with this character there is no development. The management of the language of such a character is a relatively small achievement.[1]

The sketch of the Court Chaplain, Dörffel, is not without merit, while the suggestion of character in the case of Hedemeyer goes further. One recognises the latter's discontent at his ill-employed mental energy, as also his entire lack of gentlemanly feeling.[2] If he has succeeded through some still more minor characters in embodying certain of his observations, Fontane in no way compels interest in their potential individuality.

The composition of the scenes shows variation throughout, the author, however, prefers scenes with either two or many characters. In the scenes with only

[1] One wonders at times if Fontane is mocking himself, through this character, for his interest in princes. And Eginhard contradicts Biese's statement in his *Deutsche Literaturgeschichte* to the effect that 'all the persons presented are simple people to be found to-day everywhere.'

[2] It should be noted, however, that there is scarcely any perceptible difference between his language and that of General von Rossow.

two characters, the heroine is almost invariably present.[1] *Cécile* differs from the majority of Fontane's novels in as far as the group scenes are generally presented in greater detail and more directly. This is especially applicable to the scenes in the earlier portions of the novel; and it has to be noticed that where the action is reaching its height, the presence of others besides the principal characters is merely suggested.[2] Gordon's monologues are too frequent and at times unnaturally long; moreover, they are lacking in the decisiveness which makes for the effect of a monologue in realism. As in *L'Adultera*, Fontane does not work out the dramatic possibilities of the action, the duel itself being merely reported, not actually presented. The scenes are well judged as to length, and offer no abrupt changes in character; on the other hand they are occasionally overcrowded.[3]

In general, the setting lies at first in the Harz and then in Berlin, changing also at the same time in the main from the outdoor to the indoor. Fontane's favourite veranda setting is interspersed throughout. Out of doors the setting is often of a panoramic nature in connection with a walk or a ride. Such a setting is given with greater detail and more careful colouring than the similar ones remarked in *Vor dem Sturm*. Indeed, one would incline to say that the author himself took a fuller interest in this part of the work. Interior settings are not always of a domestic nature; the theatre, the castle

[1] The exceptional cases are of no definite importance.
[2] Cf. the scene in the theatre, Ch. XXV.
[3] More particularly in the earlier part of the novel.

at Quedlinburg,[1] even the railway-train, serve as settings; but in every case there is nothing that a reader will find exacting to follow.

In the matter of proportion *Cécile* cannot be considered satisfactory. There is certainly too much speech as against reflection, more especially when it is recalled that the conversation frequently has no connection with the development of the action. The lack of reflection in the case of Cécile herself in the closing chapters is particularly felt; and this is not remedied by the fact that Gordon's reflections are not always kept strictly within bounds. Again, there is a disproportionate amount of reported, to described action. One has merely to recall the reports as to the former lives of Cécile, Gordon, and St Arnaud to recognise that, however necessary they are to the understanding of the situation, they are too weighty with concentrated interest, when compared with the action actually presented to the reader. Finally the proportion of comedy to tragedy appears false. The introduction of the Berliners and the whispers of Rosa and Gordon at the dinner-party constitute the only real touches of humour. The author's irony which never grows bitter, is undoubtedly to be accepted as an offset to the undertone of gloom which is never lost; but one does not feel that one has been given that relief which is necessary to the proper appreciation of a tragical narrative.

Cécile is the most appropriate title that could have been chosen, for despite the space actually occupied by

[1] A setting purposely chosen, as that of the Templow church in *Schach von Wuthenow*, to allow of the introduction of certain views on the construction of society.

Gordon, the woman remains throughout the central character. The addition of a sub-title, in some sense necessarily a qualification, would be contrary to the author's conception of Cécile herself. On the other hand, *Graf Petöfy* is not so happily chosen; for the old nobleman does not hold a place in the novel of that name analogous to that of the heroine in *Cécile*. Reflection would suggest probably *Graf Petöfy und seine Frau* as the most suitable and well-founded amendment.

In both novels the chapters are merely numbered. They maintain a moderate length, broken occasionally by marked brevity.[1] In the matter of the relationship between chapters and scenes, as in that of the immediate sequence of events in succeeding chapters the author manifests complete freedom. As regards chapter endings also, the novels are mainly in agreement. Striking endings are not sought, but on the other hand there is no decided falling away. The chief difference in treatment between the two novels lies in the fact that chapters endings which obviously point forward or at least suggest possible developments are more frequent in *Graf Petöfy* than in *Cécile*. Again, the two novels do not agree as regards the re-division of chapters by means of asterisks. Not much in evidence in *Graf Petöfy*, this method is very frequently employed in *Cécile*. In either novel, however, the actual result is only to obviate the use of extremely brief chapters.[2]

[1] Examples of these short chapters are in *Cécile*, IV., V., XXVIII; in *Graf Petöfy*, I., VIII., XXIII.

[2] Striking examples may be found in *Cécile*, Ch. I. or Ch. VII., where an asterisk division supervenes almost immediately after the opening of the chapter.

The letter is employed in both novels, being of more importance in *Cécile*. Whereas the occasional letters in *Graf Petöfy* serve as commentaries on the characters and their relationships, the more numerous ones in *Cécile* are more intimately connected with the actual position. Thus Gordon's letter to his sister directly causes the reader to review the situation, containing as it does, the following statement :—

'I am faced by a riddle, or at any rate something indefinite and obscure that I should like to see cleared up.' —IX., 289–90.

Further letters, as particularly the reply from Gordon's sister,[1] make the reader aware of facts vital to the development of the action. While the letter of the Court Chaplain to St Arnaud [2] discloses the final events and strikes the tone in which the story is to be read.

The introduction of verse as an aid to atmosphere is rare in both novels. A newspaper extract is used in *Cécile* to make known briefly Gordon's fate. There is no intervention on the part of the author in either novel, but whereas *Graf Petöfy* agrees with *Frau Jenny Treibel* and *L'Adultera* in avoiding likewise any taking of the reader into the author's confidence, *Cécile* is not free from this usage.[3]

[1] Ch. XXI., 404 ff.

[2] Ch XXIX., 450 ff.

[3] One finds the possessive adjective in the first plural form relating to the characters. So for example : And our travellers alighted from their carriage and looked after the train——. Ch. VII., 273.

Apart from what one learns of the characters from the manner or substance of their speech, the methods employed for the exposition of character vary in the two novels in the degree of their application. In *Cécile* the remarks, in the first place of fellow characters, in the second place of the author, are of chief importance. While the former continue throughout, the latter are more prominent in the earlier pages.[1] In *Graf Petöfy* the value of the remarks, more especially those of the author, is not so high;[2] here the use of incident demands the most attention. It is not incident of a vividly arresting nature; its significance has to be well pondered. In many cases it will appear so trifling to the casual reader that he will not pause to place any construction upon it. Yet it is this type of incident which Fontane most consistently prefers.[3] This use of small incident is, however, not unimportant in *Cécile*; it relates most frequently to the character of St Arnaud, particularly through his behaviour to his wife. Of direct psychological analysis *Graf Petöfy* contains more than *Cécile*, where it is confined mainly to Gordon. Short passages of such analysis are dotted here and there throughout the former novel, and are not confined to the exposition of the chief characters.

[1] The author's account in Ch. I. of St Arnaud's dress, and the indications of character as taken from his facial expression prove that he does not always wait for the reader to arrive at a first impression of a character.

[2] Occasionally the remarks of other persons, not necessarily figuring in the novel, are given in condensed form.

[3] Good examples are furnished by Franziska's prevention of Phemi from visiting the fortune-teller; by the arrival of the Countess Judith's first letter to Franziska after her marriage.

In general the style of the two novels is of fairly equal value, in both cases higher than that of *L'Adultera*. It is designed to convey the tone of educated conversation, and appears at times somewhat stilted. Yet, if it is not always happy in its effect, it is mostly successful in concealing the effort necessary to its construction. In *Cécile* the ironical colouring is perhaps too constant. Again, in *Cécile* there are occasional pretentious additions to the vocabulary;[1] and one or two phrases are so common as to become tiresome.[2] The use of borrowings from other languages is very much more marked in *Graf Petöfy* than in *Cécile*, but in both novels the borrowings from French far exceed any others which include examples from Latin, Greek, English, and Italian. In the former novel certain strange hybrids are to be found.[3] Tags from other tongues are not present in great numbers being rather more noticeable in *Cécile*.[4] In both novels again figures of speech designed as special ornament are extremely uncommon.[5] Fontane has been more liberal

[1] Such as: *Perpetuirlichkeit, gastrosophisch, Durchschnitts-Duellaffaire, Pulverfass-Reminiscenzen.*

[2] Such as: *aus der Seele gesprochen*; *unter solchem Gespräche.*

[3] Such as: *Gesellschaftsélite, Gefühlseffervescenz, fatamorgana-artig.*

[4] Examples from *Cécile* are: *vis-à-vis, comme-il-faut, chacun à son gout, de tout mon cœur, les beaux esprits se rencontrent*; *in pontificalibus, multum non multa*; galleries of beauties, two birds with one stone, from top to toe. From *Graf Petöfy*: *que faire? mal à propos, jours de fête*; *examen rigorosum, mulier taceat in ecclesia*; collection of beauties, plum-pudding dreams.

[5] So much so that this example of mixed sentence stands out conspicuously: 'Spotless linen came and flowers, and lastly Cécile also, still flushed from sleep.'—*Cécile*, XIV., 343.

with the rhetorical question than in either of these novels, as also with the device of leaving sentences unfinished. In conclusion, as regards *Cécile* it may be remarked that the introduction of scraps of chemist's lore serve rather to make the style more wearisome than to relieve it.[1]

The subject-matter in both novels consists for much the greater part of men and women, belonging chiefly to the aristocracy. All the characters of importance meet on the ground of conversational ability, being able to adopt and maintain a personal position. Fontane deals with their feelings, their thoughts, and their conduct, but without paying that attention to the latter which is found in the novel of manners. As usual in Fontane, the children never become properly a subject for consideration. *Graf Petöfy* is singularly devoid of anything but the scantiest references to animate nature; in *Cécile* something is made of the Newfoundland, Boncœur. It is obvious that Fontane has well observed the habits of such big dogs,[2] but the use to which he puts his observations is frequently rather sentimental. Although inanimate nature is almost lost from the latter part of *Cécile*, more is made of it on the whole in this novel than in *Graf Petöfy*. Fontane would appear thoroughly to have appreciated the beauties of the Harz and to have cherished his descriptions of them. The corresponding matter in *Graf Petöfy* does not make a like impression. Moreover, the latter novel is, for Fontane, strangely

[1] So especially in Ch. XII.

[2] Note especially the account of Boncœur and the hare in Ch. XII.

bare of the flowers over which he lingers in *Cécile*. Yet the talk on art and literature in *Cécile* is altogether outweighed by that in *Graf Petöfy*, where there is also much of a rather superficial kind concerning the theatre. The literary comment of most compass is that on Lenau,[1] followed by that on Zola and other French novelists. Politics demand but little attention in either novel; [2] but in *Graf Petöfy* one meets with some comparative criticism of different nationalities.[3] The novels agree in containing some discussion of the questions between Protestantism and Catholicism, while in *Graf Petöfy* the differences between churchmen and non-churchmen are in some manner renewed. But there is no appearance of conviction, and no sign of a real interest in religion. Finally, the historical anecdote bulks largely in *Cécile*, and is not neglected in *Graf Petöfy*. The anecdotes in *Cécile* are frequently laboured in manner; on the visit to Quedlinburg Castle, indeed, the reader is reminded of the pains of the professional guide to get in everything which may possibly add to the effect.

Certain connections with the author's personal history may be traced in both novels. So his comments on the theatre suggest his own experience as a critic of the

[1] In this connection ought to be mentioned that remarkable statement in the mouth of the Count's mother, an Englishwoman : 'that she would give all the lyric poetry of Great Britain for one poem of Lenau.' It may be recalled that Fontane confesses in *Von Zwanzig bis Dreissig* that he always retained a great partiality to Lenau.

[2] Save in a general sense at the dinner-party at St Arnaud's, *Cécile*, Ch. XX.

[3] Showing a friendliness to the Austrians.

stage,[1] while Gordon's caustic remark on journalism [2] is, after all, a hit at Fontane's own profession. More important are those recollections of his boyhood at Swinemünde, which he puts into the mouth of Franziska in *Graf Petöfy*. There are occasional touches of patriotic fervour in *Cécile* not to be found in the other novel; [3] but he does not blindly accept all that his native land has to offer. *Cécile* especially contains obvious criticism. He runs a tilt at the exaggerated cult of scholarship,[4] and condemns military exclusiveness in the following terms in the mouth of Rosa Hexel :—

'I understand nothing of politics and still less of the army, but if any one wishes in earnest to assure me that a clever General Müller is a national calamity and not to be mentioned beside a Hampel von Hampelshausen, if any one wishes in earnest to assure me of *that*, I have finished with him——.—XX., 400.

The attitude towards life illustrated in the two novels is in a broad sense identical, but it is more definitely, at times more crudely marked in *Cécile*. Anxious to acquaint himself with all the phenomena of human existence, Fontane records his observations without prejudice, but at the same time without decisive result.

[1] The following observation on the theatre seems worthy of quotation : 'One must go often to take pleasure in it; whoever goes only occasionally is hurt by the falseness of what he sees.' —*Cécile*, XVIII., 372.

[2] *Cécile*, Ch. II., 242.

[3] Cf. especially Gordon's eulogy of the youth of Germany, Ch. XIII., 328.

[4] Cf. the account of the '*ideales Pfefferkuchenhaus*,' by Eginhard aus dem Grunde in Ch. XI.

He is neither contemptuous of, nor enthusiastic over human endeavour or achievement. One is not so impressed here by fatalistic ideas, although they are not absent; but Fontane certainly does announce that ultimately little of what one would most desire is to be attained in life. Yet if one takes this thoroughly to heart, one may enjoy many small pleasures by the way. Thus it comes about in the words of the old count that :

'Everything that lives clings to life, and he alone goes who must.'—*Graf Petöfy*, III., 12.

Accordingly, he feels an interest in such things as tend to lend colour to life; and does nothing to darken the gloom that falls of itself. For if some, such as Cécile, pass from one misfortune to another, there are others, such as the old schoolmaster or the Countess Judith, who find their lives very tolerable. In *Cécile*, Fontane exhibits more sentimentality than is usual with him, while in *Graf Petöfy* he seems himself somewhat affected by the touch of superstition he lends to the characters.[1] Yet he contradicts these tendencies by the brusque manner of the generalisations to which he is addicted.[2] This manner is naturally connected with his custom of never being amazed at anything, but of quietly analysing all things. And this continually maintained analysis leads him to the view expressed by the actress Franziska :

[1] Cf. especially the incidents connected with the bell of the castle at Arpa.

[1] Cf. 'Brothers and sisters never know one another.'—*Graf Petöfy*, II., 8–9. 'All Scots are hard-headed.'—*Cécile*, XVIII., 378.

'Besides, much in life is merely comedy, and any one who is already professionally acquainted with the play and all its greater and lesser arts has an advantage over others, and can easily transfer it from the stage to life.'—*Graf Petöfy*, XII., 95.

Apart from those occasional short and well-considered descriptive passages in *Cécile* in which it would be difficult to find a flaw, the finest thing in both novels is the character drawing. And the most admirable portraits, entitled to rank with Fontane's best, are those of Petöfy, his sister Judith, and Colonel St Arnaud.

CHAPTER VII

Unequal Marriages, II.: *Unwiederbringlich; Effi Briest*

The central theme of *Unwiederbringlich* shows a mingling of important elements from *Quitt* and *Cécile*. There are people of temperaments so antagonistic that they cannot in the long run live happily together, however happy an inauguration to their married life the apparent law of the attraction of opposites may ensure; and there are individuals who find it impossible to maintain any permanent sense of content. Such is the case with Count Holk and his wife in the first instance, and with the wife in the second. Again, there are men, as Count Holk, who live so exclusively in the moment that they develop no real character, thereby unintentionally involving themselves and others in difficulties. Fontane is also desirous of acquainting the reader in some measure with the nature and particularly the atmosphere of Court life in Denmark.

With the central theme Fontane obtains a considerable measure of success, despite the fact that he insists rather too much on the better days gone by and brings the reader rather too sparingly into intimate touch with Christine. One feels that Holk cannot continue to live

at peace with his wife, not so much because he is oppressed by her superiority—this plausible cause is over-exploited by the author—but because, his original enthusiasm for Christine having waned, he longs to see a smiling face and hear some bright chatter. Neither can Christine continue to experience satisfaction in her married life, for she recognises that she possesses no influence over her husband, does not for long produce in him any open or active revolt. One feels, perhaps, more indefinitely that Christine can never attain to permanent happiness, although her experience of happiness is much longer and apparently more actual than that of Lehnert Menz. As Lehnert has too keen a perception of the inevitable wrongs brought upon the individual by the social system, so Christine has too fixed and strict a belief in the necessity and value of the application of 'principles' to human existence. And this belief which must have its roots in her character has been rendered ineradicable by her training in the Herrnhut institution. One who expects others to adhere to principles with which they may not agree and which they find without their compass cannot achieve lasting happiness. The dissatisfaction with the state of affairs continues to grow naturally. One gets on the whole a fairly good grip of Holk, although there are moments when one is rather puzzled. But this is, after all, as it should be, for Holk appears at times rather puzzled over himself. One realises clearly how much he wants to be at Court when he is at home, and at home when he is at Court. A continual source of weakness in him is his desire, whenever he is not absolutely exasperated, to save the feelings of others. No

man who defers so greatly to others can achieve a solid success. For himself, Fontane does not make enough of this weakness, apparently not recognising its true value. The novelist's descriptions of the life of the Holstein nobility are of about the same standard as those of the life in the Hungarian castle in *Graf Petöfy*. Copenhagen appears to the reader very remote. When he comes to deal with the circle of the Princess he is more successful. It may be from an innate attraction to such forms of life that he renders his circle real, even in its artificiality. One thing, trifling on the surface, is of great assistance: he does not, more than is strictly necessary, insist on the fact that the Princess is a Princess. Moreover, he is careful to present his characters both in their official Court capacity and in their unofficial life, so that the reader loses any tendency to regard them as mere figures. Were they shown in their official capacity only, suspicion as to their naturalness could hardly be destroyed.

Opening with the description of the castle at Holkenäs, Fontane unfolds a plot which he strengthens occasionally by foreshadowing. A Holstein noble, Count Holk, and his wife, Christine, on account of their opposite temperaments and attitudes to life gradually drift apart, until the gulf between them is becoming too marked. Holk, who fills a place in the suite of a Danish princess, falls in love with a lady-in-waiting of at least questionable virtue. Desiring to make a clean break with the past, the Count returns to Holstein and explains the position to his wife, who leaves him. The lady-in-waiting marries another man. Holk crosses to London, where he leads a rather aimless life. Friends arrange a reconciliation

between husband and wife; but shortly afterwards Christine throws herself into the sea.

The significance of the plot is greatly heightened by the incidents which take place during the burning of the castle at Fredericksborg.[1] The powerful treatment of these incidents is again suggestive of the ballad-writer. An error in construction is committed when, after Arne and Schwarzkoppen have discoursed rather clumsily on the project of bringing back Christine to the love for her husband,[2] no attempt is made in this direction.

Judging superficially, there would appear to be a considerable body of extraneous matter; but on going deeper one realises that this matter is not without its bearing upon the characters. A true appreciation of Holk himself is often dependent on the recognition of such matter. One is left finally with the historical and semi-historical anecdotes. Yet, although it is certainly true that many of these offer no opportunity of judging character, it must be remembered that they serve in part to strengthen the atmosphere in which Holk's passion develops.

The characters are of varying ages, but the author treats of the children only fleetingly.[3] The interest is divided between the male and female characters. All these persons, with the exception of three clergymen who do not demand much attention, belong to the nobility; while Fontane oversteps his usual bounds by introducing a member of a royal family.

Helmuth Holk, the chief character, is essentially a

[1] Ch. XXVII. [2] Ch. V.

[3] In fact the boy Axel is never actually presented to the reader.

man who desires to enjoy life; but he has no wish to debar others from a similar enjoyment. In consequence, he shuns insistence on problems, without testing his ability to solve them. His motto is *carpe diem*, and he is always suspicious of those who overlook its excellence. He is selfish, but not in a blatant manner; and so, with Arne, one could readily forgive him. A man who might have gained a character in the army, he remains undeveloped, and therefore too open to influence. But any influence which, as does Christine's, grates upon his natural impulses will rouse him sooner or later to a bid for freedom. A certain shallowness of sentiment and a dislike of irregularities which tend to postpone this bid are well summed up in these words of his wife :—

'It is possible that you find a certain pleasure in the presence of the children, but then it is much the same with the sugar-bowl, which must always stand to the right of you if you are to feel at ease.'—VI., 43.

Nevertheless, despite his absorption in his own pleasures, one is very willing to regard him as a man in whom there is more good than bad. And if one makes a mistake in so doing, it is not on account of a distinctive and engaging personal tone in his speech which, while it does not contradict its own ends, is not sufficiently differentiated from that of the other characters, save Christine.

Christine Holk is a good woman, with nothing of the hypocrite about her, but she has allowed her principles in some ways to smother her lovable qualities. She has not duly struggled against the all too deadening weight of ideas instilled into a mind originally sober. Even in

the love for her children she cannot lose and forget herself. The sobriety of her mind, under the evil influence of her dissatisfaction with the outcome of her marriage, changes to melancholy which in the end destroys her will to love that ought, in agreement with her principles of well-doing, to have remained unshaken. As one sees her seeking no relief for her tortured mind in little graces, let alone in follies, one recognises that the author has been courageous enough to present her thoroughly true to life. There are no spurious additions for the sake of picturesqueness. Her speech, which is much the best managed in *Unwiederbringlich*, is an admirable support to the other indications of character. The dignity of her expression at all times saves the undertone of disappointment and disgust from turning into mere abuse.

There is a slight romantic touch about the name Ebba von Rosenberg, whose bearer is an adventuress without malice. Indifferent to the complications occasioned by her conduct, she is willing to play with Holk for the excitement of the moment, while laying her plans to snare a more permanent victim. Talking glibly and without any restrictions, she yet never becomes impudent or vulgar. She employs capable wits in weaving a net stronger than any woven by mere physical beauty.

Amongst the other characters are some good contrasts. One meets the stout man of the world, Pentz; the thin valetudinarian, Erichsen; the talkative and human Princess; the human, but less talkative Dobschütz; [1] the careful and rather stodgy Schwarzkoppen; and the

[1] She is a somewhat superior example of the lady-companion whom Fontane introduces in other novels.

careful but rather jovial Arne. Each of these could be developed into an excellent full character. Amongst the still more subsidiary persons one should remark particularly the two clergymen, Petersen and Schleppegrell. From a comparison of them with Schwarzkoppen one would incline to suppose that Fontane felt the least sympathy for the clergyman who approached most nearly to orthodoxy.

The scenes range from group scenes to those in which only one person appears; these latter do not always contain monologues. A great number of the scenes are social in character, varying much, however, in the detail with which they are presented. The exciting scenes during the burning of the castle, and the piquant ones in the house of the widow Hansen are of a type not frequent in Fontane. Again the assiduity with which the hero is kept before the reader's eyes is much beyond the average marked in the novels; while the many references to and the few appearances of such an important character as Christine seem strange. From a study of the scenes alone one would undoubtedly incline to believe that *Unwiederbringlich* was something in the nature of an experiment.

The greater number of settings are to be found in Holstein, or in Copenhagen or its neighbourhood; the London settings, after the manner of the novelist in dealing with foreign lands, remain very vague. While indoor and outdoor settings continue throughout to give place to one another, the latter are generally more detailed and leave a clearer impression on the mind. The average of detail is, however, in both types higher than that met with in several of the novels; and such settings

as that of the widow Hansen's house, over which he endeavours to throw at least the shadow of the extraordinary, are foreign to his usual methods. The landscape settings recall those in *Cécile*.

Unwiederbringlich can by no means be called a model of proportion. Except as regards Holk, and despite his signal importance in the novel, one must hold that there is too much speech as opposed to reflection, and again too much speech as opposed to action in the case of the majority of the characters. This latter fault is greatly strengthened by the amount of anecdotal conversation. Moreover, the author introduces too much reported action in proportion to that which is actually described; this is particularly obvious in the matter of the developments at Holkenäs, during the time that Holk is in Denmark. Nevertheless, the novel is not without its good points in this direction. Little fault can be found with the proportion of description to action. Again the proportion of comedy to tragedy, which comes more in question here than in some of the other novels, has not been neglected. There is a sufficiency of light scenes amongst those which lead up to the catastrophe to maintain a credible likeness to actuality.

Effi Briest is designed to show how strange a thing is life, and how merciful should be the judgment upon each other of all those who attempt to wrestle with it. Those who expect to extract great happiness from it will be grievously mistaken; yet passing satisfaction may be experienced. The opportunity of enjoying this satisfaction will come most readily to him who does not question overmuch what happens, and who is not inclined to

saddle himself with the responsibility of matters beyond his immediate comprehension. Much of the attitude which it is wise for a man to adopt may be deduced from Briest's closing words to his wife :—

'Please stop, Luise—that is *too* wide a field.'

Further, the novelist wishes to expose the laws, often unwritten, which govern the life of society, and to demonstrate their consequences, without, however, recording a definite decision in any direction. This leaving of the question is typical of his own philosophy. He desires the reader to realise that it was not Effi's guilt, but such laws reinforced by the dread of opinion that killed Crampas suddenly, Effi slowly, and deprived Instetten's career of all real meaning. He is much less concerned than in some of the other novels in picturing the actual composition of the social circle, but takes more pains than ordinarily in revealing the attitude of domestics towards their employers.[1] The atmosphere of the story is meant to induce not exactly that mild fatalism discovered in other novels, but rather the feeling that any attempt to force the course of events must lead to the worst of trouble.

In a general manner Fontane is successful in the working out of all his themes. This success is in great part due to the atmosphere he creates to accompany careful analysis, and to the lack of that suspicion of artificiality which befalls one at times in *Graf Petöfy*.

[1] Over the life in Berlin he throws a veil, perhaps in a manner to show that this part of Effi's life was really without substance.

One feels that he has chosen characters with which he was in actual communion, and has placed them to a considerable extent in settings with which he was familiar. He was thus able correctly to gauge the effect of environment on character. In all that is connected with the philosophical exposition the author is successful in getting the reader on to his side. Making no effort to influence him, he allows him to see and judge for himself the laws which govern the life of such a man as Instetten, without insistently parading the latter's actual social position. Despite his love for Effi, old Briest, as every reader must feel, remains at the last still capable of incidental satisfaction. Allowing for a few romantic touches, the relationship between domestics and employers is handled with much insight.

The plot in its bare outlines is not much more than slight, and it is in no sense original. It is the plot of the general society novel; it is, however, handled with delicacy and consummate mastery. Without being coloured for effect, it never loses its hold over the reader. At the age of seventeen Effi Briest is married to a man nearer forty than thirty, who gives her all the love of which he is capable, receiving none in return. Effi is soon weary of the little harbour town in which her husband holds a legal appointment; and the arrival of a major of Landwehr gives her the occasion of forming a fresh intimacy, again without real foundation in sentiment. When Instetten, her husband, receives an appointment in Berlin, Effi dreams of beginning a new life, trusting that the past will remain buried. Seven years pass by. Then, during his wife's absence, Instetten comes by

chance upon the letters written to her by Major Crampas. He challenges and kills Crampas; and separates himself from his wife. Effi, tended by a faithful servant, drags on in loneliness and grief, until she returns to her father's house to die. The interest of the plot is strengthened by foreshadowing passages;[1] while the symbolic is employed with restraint and artistry.[2] On obvious symbolism the author is free to turn his back, as may be seen from the following passage :—

> The weather was magnificent, with a bright morning sun; there were only a few passengers on board. Instetten recalled the day when, returning with Effi from the honeymoon, he had driven along the bank of the Kessine—a gray November day then, but he himself merry at heart; now it was just the opposite, the light was outside, and the November day in him.—XXVIII., 298.

The same difficulty of distinguishing the actually from the apparently extraneous already experienced in some of the smaller novels recurs here. On first thoughts one is scarcely able to recall anything purely extraneous. Even incidents dependent upon passing characters, such as the singer Trippelli, or Frau Zwicker, appear enlightening as to Effi. The strictest examination will reveal the fact that the crisis between Effi and Crampas did not require so full an introduction as that of the party at Ring's; nevertheless, one must weigh against

[1] These begin with Instetten's earliest reflections on the result of the marriage on which he was determined, Ch. III.

[2] Accordingly Mielke goes too far when he suggests in *Der Deutsche Roman des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts* that there is something unfinished about Fontane's work in this respect.

this the novelist's right to paint the environment in which his heroines move in as liberal a manner as he deems requisite. As this is the most definite case that can be brought forward, it must be admitted that Fontane has shown unusually nice judgment in the writing of a novel of considerable length.

The company of characters includes children and graybeards; but the children are of no more importance than customarily in Fontane. The female characters occupy more space than the male; and, outside the domestics, those of both sexes are of aristocratic birth, save the very subsidiary professional men and an exceptionally educated chemist. Despite this chemist, it may be said that the characters on the whole are not so attached to well-informed conversation as the people of Fontane's novels usually are. In this respect there is even in the case of Instetten more of suggestion than of actual demonstration. In consequence, the characters are not inclined to be boring, with the exception of the two maids, Roswitha and Johanna; but with regard to them the quality may be taken as legitimate.[1] The company is numerous, although the main interest never lies outside Effi and her husband; many characters are introduced, say a word or two, and drop out again. In this respect it may be considered a fault that Hilda Niemeyer, to whom Effi at times refers, should not be shown with an opinion on the course of events.[2] The

[1] It may be recalled that Instetten himself grows tired of Johanna, despite the attachment she displays.

[2] It would appear as if Fontane did not trust himself to make more of this character, whatever the reason. He could hardly have forgotten her, as he returns to her father.

dog Rollo, of whom the reader is never allowed to lose sight, is deserving of mention.

Effi Briest is portrayed mercilessly but justly. The portrait, indeed, is so complete that the reader wonders if he is meeting some person of note, although actually she is insignificant enough. Certainly one must constantly bear in mind her early marriage, even if one cannot agree with her mother that this was definitely responsible for her misfortune. Her youth must have coloured highly the visions she had of the life she would lead with Instetten. Again it must not be forgotten that in the opening chapter Effi herself reflects upon stories of infidelity and its punishment. Adding to this her sensations on entering her husband's house, one realises her impressionable nature. Not stupid, she is in the beginning without much knowledge of the world and its affairs. She is ambitious for an assured position from the outset, and so does not consider marriage with her cousin, Dagobert von Briest, to whom she is attracted. But she is not logical. Willing to marry Instetten as a man who has already shown his ability to go far, she expects him to possess the pleasing and flattering ways of the young lieutenant. Yet she has a good heart, means no ill, and is not foolishly proud. These qualities do not, however, give her a grip on life : characteristically she turns, after her ruin, to painting, an art in which she knows she can attain to no real success. Anxious for distraction, she longs for Instetten's society, while at the same time she desires him to scheme and work for promotion. Having no faith, but shunning absolutely the recognition of her state of disbelief, she

inclines, in common with Franziska in *Graf Petöfy*, to be superstitious. The reader does not find her extraordinarily attractive, save when her 'great laughing brown eyes' gaze out without artifice; still he will accept her at her best as a likeable companion, and as a young woman who might under more favourable conditions have out-distanced her peers in the development of real character. Her love of colour and her abhorrence of dull sameness ever threaten to disturb her judgment; but there is something which goes much further, a defect in moral temperament. Her own words may serve as a guide:—

'And I have the guilt on my soul,' she repeated. 'Yes, it *lies* there, but is it a *burden* on my soul? No. And that is why I am afraid of myself. What makes the burden is something quite different—fear, mortal fear, and the eternal dread that in the end it must come to light. And then beyond the fear, shame. I am ashamed. But as my remorse is not true, neither is my shame. I am ashamed only of the everlasting lying and deceit.'—XXIV., 271.

Yet she remains neither a bad woman, nor one descending from illusions to coarseness in company with Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*.

Geert von Instetten is on the whole a straightforward character, even if, as his name suggests, he desires to appear somewhat different from his equals. He has set his mind on a wife who will find her chief pleasure in turning his thoughts from the daily round; and to such a wife he will devote himself as far as in him lies. Yet there is something of the pedagogue in him which prevents him from giving his wife fair play. One may

well believe that in the first instance he chose the haunted house in order to be different from others; but, as Crampas asserts, it seems from his hedging on the subject that he was pleased with the opportunity of 'training' his wife. Calculating always, frequently cold, he is neither brutal nor callous. His aim is to rise in his profession and to possess a wife worthy of the highest station; he cannot, nevertheless, disregard what he holds to be the laws governing the conduct of a gentleman. With this is naturally connected a certain touchiness, and an inability to face his equals with any flaw in his moral armour. One need not denounce his talk of being a part which must respect the whole as mere hypocrisy,[1] but one cannot help thinking that he is extremely thankful to have this doctrine to put forward in support of conduct which may spring more from other sources. That Instetten is, however, in good part a gentleman, one may judge by his action when Roswitha appeals for Rollo for her mistress. His actual failure as a husband for Effi proceeds much less from his beliefs and principles than from his temperament.

Instetten's speech is well managed throughout, being in keeping with the general estimate of his character. A little stodgy, it comes to the point; unornamented and unenthusiastic, it is without deceit. Instetten is used to considering his words weighty, but he has not allowed this consideration to turn his head.[2] The novelist has not been so successful with the speech of

[1] Cf. his declaration of belief in Ch. XXVII.

[2] Cf. his conversation with Wüllersdorf as to the duel, in Ch. XXVII.

the heroine. Effi does not at first employ the language common to her age and sex; it savours too much of Gieshübler or of her husband, more particularly when she is in conversation with one or other of these persons. Just as he has been able to strike the proper tone in Effi's early talks with her father, so the novelist succeeds better with her later talk as a whole, especially in the matter of preserving it from becoming prudish on the one hand or foolish on the other.

Effi Briest bears striking witness to Fontane's ability to draw subsidiary characters, as also to the power of suggestion with which he can endow the merest outlines. Further, these subsidiary characters preserve their independence in the matter of speech. So Gieshübler and Crampas use to Effi much the same words, judging superficially, but the insinuation in the latter and the lack of insinuation in the former cannot escape the more careful observer.

The name Alonzo Gieshübler prepares the reader to meet a man out of the common. This picturesque chemist's Romanticism does not tend to absurdity, nor his gallantry to moral obliquity. He is intelligent, but not inquisitive; with delicate feelings, but not demonstrative; an excellent companion who never oversteps the bounds of propriety. He is a gentleman, if a gentleman be one who respects the feelings of others; for he even goes so far as not to use the lawfully acquired 'Doctor' before his name out of consideration for the practitioners.[1]

[1] His love of newspaper reading connects him with Fontane's father.

Major von Crampas is the typical philanderer. He has noble mustachios, much confidence, and more bravado, without being actually a bully or a coward. If he does not respect Instetten as a husband, he does as an adversary; while in the duel he comports himself admirably. Otherwise he has little to distinguish him save a professed love for Heine; but the parade of his scanty literary knowledge only leads the reader to ponder what stores of information and appreciation Gieshübler holds in reserve. Yet he has one quality which demands some sympathy: his indifference to the blows of fate. He is never surprised whining.

The consideration of Effi's parents, as far as they have been developed by the novelist, brings one to the conclusion that she is indeed their child. Frau von Briest is a woman who takes things as they come, without dispensing with her right to anticipate on occasion: thus one places upon her the chief responsibility for her daughter's marriage. Neither sentimental nor romantic, she yet does not look on life or marriage as a mere business matter. Her feelings are, on the whole, sound, but one notices that her maternal affection is not very deep. Neither prudish nor reckless, she is a good example of a decent human being without ideals. Her speech shows her sure of herself on her ground, and dubious of going outside it; when she does overcome her hesitation she remains equally dogmatic.

Effi's father has points of resemblance to and difference from his wife. So he goes further in the freedom of his language, but never passes beyond the border of his own ground. One feels, however, that this latter

characteristic is derived more from a desire not to waken himself out of a comfortable position than from a fundamental incapacity to think. He is liberal within measure, but given to remarking on the limits of that measure. Mere appearance and comportment are sufficient to impress him, as in the case of Instetten. If not very deep, his feelings are quicker and more generally sympathetic than those of his wife; but they would never jeopardise the place of personal comfort as his first consideration.

Roswitha and Johanna are contrasting specimens of the faithful domestic: Roswitha, who is somewhat dense, shows genuine fidelity and a particular liking for Effi; Johanna, who has a snobbish satisfaction in being in the service of a good family, clings to the idea that she will at some time impress her master. Of the many outline characters one may select Wüllersdorf, the disillusioned, but dependable bachelor; Sidonie von Grasenabb, the very Christian, but spiteful spinster; and Rummschüttel, the worldly-wise, but warm-hearted old physician.

There is the usual full range of scenes. The actual monologues in which either Effi or Instetten appear are of a high standard, neither the speech nor the accompanying gestures being exaggerated. Exceptionally for Fontane, scenes with three characters are found; but they are never given in full, being, indeed, often restricted to the merest outline. As in the shorter novels, the author does not endeavour to paint the whole of scenes of a social order, but contents himself with giving an impression. Although the heroine does not appear in every scene, her absence is rare; the relationship between

the central character and the scenes is thus the same as in *Unwiederbringlich*. The scenes show an occasional tendency to the dramatic, if they are hardly dramatic in their execution. An exception to this latter reservation is the duel scene,[1] which is presented with notable terseness; while the scene where Annie comes to visit her mother [2] is above criticism. Scenes occur in which only the speech is of importance; but they are neither exaggerated nor abnormally frequent, as was the case in *Graf Petöfy*. Fontane undoubtedly achieves throughout the highest results with the simplest methods; while the atmosphere for the changing scenes is never false.

Indoor and outdoor settings interchange, while the veranda is not forgotten. The outdoor settings, which tend to be more distinct than the others, are often of a panoramic nature.[3] Indeed, these panoramic nature settings are those on which the novelist has expended most care; elsewhere the outdoor settings emphasise the sky conditions and the character of the wind; while the reader gains only impressions of the houses in Kessin, Berlin, and Hohen Cremmen, in the last two instances of very slight value. It would appear that Fontane is here rather indifferent to the matter of settings; an odd remark here and there is frequently deemed sufficient.[4] It should be remarked, however, that the garden at Hohen Cremmen, with its sundial and heliotropes,

[1] Ch. XXVIII.

[2] Ch. XXXIII. As an example of the novelist's advance in power, it may be compared to the corresponding scene between Melanie and her children in *L'Adultera*.

[3] But, characteristically, never from a train.

[4] Cf. that on Gieshübler's sofa, in Ch. XI.

which forms the opening setting, is used again at the close, and forms a standard contrast to the other settings in which Effi appears.

On a first reading, one will find nothing amiss with the proportion of the novel. In the case of the two principal characters, the closest examination will reveal no fault in the proportion existing between speech and reflection. Doubts may remain in the case of Frau Briest, but one must take into consideration the fact that much of her ralk is of a semi or wholly reflective cast. On the whole the true proportion cannot be said to suffer. The proportion of description to action will be found to be much better kept than in many of the novels : while the descriptive matter is never allowed to become rambling, the value of the action is greatly increased by its perfect appositeness to the psychological development of the characters. Again, the due proportion between reported and described action is much better preserved than in many other instances : the reported action is restricted to serving the place of a relief to the described action, while it is never simply artificially introduced for this purpose. A closer examination thus not only confirms first impressions, but definitely places *Effi Briest* among the best proportioned of Fontane's novels.

Against the title *Effi Briest*, which refers directly to the outstanding character in the novel, objection cannot be raised. The title *Unwiederbringlich* is not beyond cavil. While it certainly suggests the psychological nature of the novel, it would appear to lay greater stress on Christine as against Holk, while the reader actually sees much more of the latter.

In both novels the chapters are of a uniform and moderate length, with occasional examples of brevity.[1] Again, they agree in the absence of dramatic endings,[2] although all chapters do not patently fall away at the close. Again, if the endings do not directly point forward, they may be suggestive of what is to come.[3] The chapters stand without heading, thus in a manner correctly indicating that there is no definite connection between chapter and scene; most frequently several scenes are compressed into one chapter. The chapters may or may not be immediately connected : chapters thus immediately connected are much more common in *Unwiederbringlich* than in *Effi Briest,* but even there it is very unusual for all the characters appearing in the first of a group of chapters to reappear in those that follow. Sub-division by asterisks occurs in both novels, but only in *Unwiederbringlich* is any object beyond the avoidance of very brief chapters obvious. In this novel asterisks are often employed to mark off the component parts of a large scene.

The letter is of importance in both novels; it is found throughout. In all cases the letter must be accepted as necessary to the effective construction of the novel; while it is invariably written with skill in the matter of condensation. It may serve to expose the character of

[1] So *Effi Briest,* Ch. II., XIV.; *Unwiederbringlich,* Ch. XXXII.

[2] Dramatic tension is not entirely absent from the endings of Chs. XXV., XXIX., of *Unwieaerbringlich.*

[3] For good examples see *Effi Briest,* Ch. XXIII.; *Unwiederbringlich,* Ch. XV.

the writer,[1] or to give the gist of events and situations that the novelist does not wish to give in detail;[2] or it may combine these two offices.[3] There are occasional approaches in *Effi Briest* to the letter of travel.

The scraps of verse in *Effi Briest* are negligible, but in *Unwiederbringlich*, apart from a long ballad,[4] there are two quotations from poetry which are of value in the establishing of the mood of the novel. The gloom-presaging lines are taken from Uhland's *Das Schloss am Meer*[5] and from Wilhelm Waiblinger's *Der Kirchhof*.[6]

The author does not directly interpose himself in either novel, but in *Unwiederbringlich* he once takes the reader into his confidence.[7]

There is no restriction to any particular methods of character exposition in either novel, but there are differences in the degree in which these methods are employed. Exposition of character through incident is of importance in both novels, but there is disagreement with regard to the value of remarks. Thus the remarks on character in *Effi Briest*, whether made openly by the

[1] Cf. Holk's letter to Christine, *Unwiederbringlich*, Ch. XV., 130 ff. Instetten's letter to Effi, *Effi Briest*, Ch. IV., 34.

[2] Cf. in *Unwiederbringlich* the concluding letter of Julie von Dobschütz to Schwarzkoppen; in *Effi Briest* the letter from Wüllersdorf to Instetten, Ch. XXIX., 306–7.

[3] Cf. in *Unwiederbringlich*, Christine's letter to Holk, Ch. XVIII., 161 ff.; in *Effi Briest*, Effi's to her mother, Ch. XII., 118 ff.

[4] On the death of the Danish Admiral, Herluf Trolle.

[5] Cf. Ch. I., 3–4. [6] Ch. VI., 52.

[7] 'Our acquaintance, Lt.-Colonel Tersling.' The use of the possessive seems to point here, as on other occasions in Fontane, to the familiarity which borders on contempt.

author or placed in the mouths of persons in the novel, assist the reader least of all towards an accurate judgment, while in *Unwiederbringlich* they can never be overlooked. Indeed, in the latter work this interchange of opinion goes far towards holding the characters before the eyes of the reader as living realities; for he realises how frequently in his own experience opinions on men differ on the surface, but agree at bottom. As regards direct psychological analysis, *Effi Briest* is richer than *Unwiederbringlich*; for while in the latter novel it is practically confined to Holk, in the former it is definitely applied at least to the two chief characters, and increases in importance the further the action advances. The monologues of Holk and Instetten, it may be remarked, are not necessarily wholly useful in the direct analysis of character.[1]

The value of the style is not equal in the two novels. The style of *Effi Briest* is admirably suited to the character of the novel, and it is well sustained throughout. It is unencumbered by strange wording, artificial periods, or other rhetorical devices of none but ornamental import. It presents no difficulties; but, while preserving the marks of culture, it never suggests slovenliness. The style of *Unwiederbringlich*, while pleasing in its general effect, does not convey the same impression of strength or sureness as that of *Effi Briest*. Rather it conveys a certain impression of superficiality,

[1] In Ch. IV., 25, the novelist makes Arne say: 'I have the virtue, you know, of being able to win at whist, while following almost everything that is being read or said about me.' This speech with its savour of the bounder is quite out of keeping with the character of Arne as otherwise shown.

as if the novel were more of an exercise than a work of art lovingly wrought; and yet one cannot point to any serious technical defects.

Coming to details, one notes that the paragraphs in *Unwiederbringlich* incline to be longer than those in *Effi Briest*, where they run chiefly to a decidedly moderate length. Peculiarities in single words are extremely rare in both novels.[1] Neither vocabulary is overburdened with borrowings from foreign languages; in this respect Fontane exercises marked restraint, compared with his practice in *Graf Petöfy* or *L'Adultera*. Borrowings from French are easily the most numerous; and after the Latin borrowings come those from English, the number of the latter used in *Unwiederbringlich* being above the average for Fontane's novels, and including some words not previously found.[2] Foreign phrases are very sparingly used; the paucity of French in a novel so long as *Effi Briest* is especially notable in Fontane.[3] Rhetorical questions, although in no sense absent, do not occur so freely in *Effi Briest* as in *Unwiederbringlich*, where they are in the mouths of all the important characters. It is impossible not to quote at least two examples from the latter novel. In reply to Holk's comment that an

[1] So that such a word as the following stands out clearly: *Ausstattungs-und-Wirtschaftseinrichtungsfragen*, *Effi Briest*, III., 20.

[2] Cf. robbers; lawn; gentleman-farmer.

[3] French phrases in *Unwiederbringlich*: *tout à vous*, *chronique scandaleuse*, *après nous le déluge*; English: fair, fat, and forty; Latin: *medico præsente*. In *Effi Briest*, Italian: *a tempo*; French: *en famille*, *esprit fort*, *façon de parler*, *faux pas*. There is also in French a long telegram from Trippelli to Effi.

historical anecdote just related was in 'too petty a manner,' Ebba von Rosenberg exclaims :—

'But what is the grand manner? The grand manner is simply the passing by of everything in which people are really interested.'—XXII., 203.

As has already been noticed by R. M. Meyer,[1] the application of this to Fontane's own method is plain. And equally characteristic of the novelist are the words he puts in the mouth of Frau Schleppegreel :—

'For what is the right? Actually, it is never fixed. But forbearance towards a good man is always right.'—XXI., 192.

In both novels the author is given to the breaking off of sentences; examples are too frequent in *Effi Briest*. Here, also, one finds the allied device of using sentences of one, two, or three words without a verb to be in high favour. *Unwiederbringlich* shows considerable and often excellent use of parentheses; and finally proverbs occur oftener than is the rule with Fontane.[2]

In both novels the human adult is the pre-eminent subject-matter; the chief persons, whether male or female, belonging to the aristocracy. The children hardly attain to anything but a shadowy existence. While not ignoring their manners and customs, Fontane

[1] In *Gestalten und Probleme*.

[2] He makes no effort to get outside the ordinary run, as may be judged from the following examples : *Dem einen sein Schad' ist dem andern sein Nutz*, X., 77; *Stille Wasser sind tief*, XI., 95; *Kein Vogel beschmutzt das eigne Nest*, XVI., 144.

devotes himself to the psychological study of his characters. If he is not averse to giving glimpses of social activities and demeanour, he always returns to psychological questions, more particularly as they are affected by the relationship between the two sexes. In *Effi Briest* he is more willing than in the other novel to give some exterior impressions; these are free from weakness in observation and expression.

The only notable exception to the ignoring of animate nature is to be found in the space devoted to the dog Rollo, a Newfoundland, as so often in Fontane's novels. It may be observed that in common with Uncas in *Quitt*, Rollo appears to be forgotten in the middle of the action, but stands out boldly at the close. The two novels differ widely in their treatment of inanimate nature. In and for itself it may be said to receive no attention in *Effi Briest*; and even in connection with mood or incident it never develops real significance. In *Unwiederbringlich*, on the other hand, although flowers, in which Fontane usually shows much interest, are neglected, faultless vignettes recur with regularity. Unfortunately, the characters have rather too marked a habit of stopping 'involuntarily' to admire the scenery. Apparently the novelist finds himself forced to adopt this method. In the manner of landscape painters, Fontane at times dots his rather prescribed canvas with figures.[1] Of other subject-matter *Effi Briest* contains but little; even the historical anecdote is

[1] Cf. the picture in which the deer are approaching the balcony of the Eremitage. It recalls a similar picture with swans in *Schach von Wuthenow*, and may be thought by some to savour of romantic ornament.

afforded small scope. Outside scattered and fugitive remarks, there remain only some few pages of talk on Heine. One concludes that the conversation in this novel proceeds more naturally from the circumstances and affairs of the characters than that in any of the books so far considered. Despite the fact that it is frequently in the air in *Unwiederbringlich*, religion scarcely claims any definite place as subject-matter; and the same may be said of literature. Politics, Danish and Prussian, are of more consequence. Anecdotes of an historical or semi-historical nature bulk largely in this novel, some of them being of considerable length. These anecdotes do not stay in the memory, as do Fontane's best; and are not always free from tediousness. They are derived from Danish history, and despite their moderate success one is almost tempted at times to believe that the opportunity of retailing them was one of the chief things in Fontane's mind when he decided to write the novel.

There is no apparent connection with the author's personal history to be found in *Unwiederbringlich*; while the question of his attitude towards his country, if to some extent raised, is dealt with in a superficial manner.[1] In *Effi Briest* also, the author's attitude towards his country is not seriously illustrated: orthodox suggestions as to the paramount importance of Bismarck and the kindly impressiveness of William I. can hardly be taken as forming a sufficient basis for criticism. *Effi Briest* has, however, a very definite connection with the

[1] As more is said against Germany, more strictly Prussia, than for it, Fontane may claim not to allow his love of country to bring a false tone into his novel.

novelist's personal history. The Kessin of the novel is the Swinemünde of his boyhood; hence his certainty in dealing with the life of the town, its leading men, and the gentry of the surrounding district. The *Ressource* recalls Fontane's father and the elements of character he has in common with the chemist Gieshübler: his gallant manners, his desire for information, and his insistence on bringing some colour into the drabness of the little town. And if the actual resemblance does not carry much further, readers of *Meine Kinderjahre*, while recognising the differences, will tend to connect much in the two books.

If Fontane's general attitude towards life does not differ markedly in *Effi Briest* from what has been found in previous novels, one cannot help thinking that his feelings have grown deeper and his mood more sober. He cannot regard those who fail in life as 'ghastly examples,' but rather as a touchstone by which other men may test their sympathy with mankind. Every man should have a fellow feeling towards others, and examine their records without bitterness, but also without sentimentality; he should neither condemn nor condone any one off-hand. Even if the ultimate outcome of life be almost certainly dissatisfaction, there are many ways of making the passing hour more pleasant. Occasionally the realist does not despise the claims of fancy;[1] and there is a romantic touch about some of his journeyings. He has an eye, too, for things out of the ordinary, such as the ornaments in Instetten's house; and a heart for

[1] Cf. the solemn farce of the committal of the gooseberries, or rather of the gooseberry-skins to the river, Ch. I.

cheerful company. He believes in the open air, and takes one out into it whether on land or water; but the seclusion of the country remains to him always in part something by which to measure the advantages of the town. He would not appear to consider art of any vital import to the well-being of man. The discussion of 'burning questions' should be where possible avoided; for much of life, even perhaps the greatest part, is hollow. But despite this hollowness, it is not without attractions. One may say of Fontane what he says of Crampas :—

> He likes life and at the same time is indifferent to it. —XXVII., 300.

Moreover, he feels that the individual is powerless against the ingrained vanities of the world. This belief he puts in the mouth of Wüllersdorf, where he speaks of duelling :

> 'We must take the world as we find it, and things do not go as *we* wish, but as the *others* wish. That about the "ordeal by combat," of which many so pompously assure us, is certainly nonsense, and to be disregarded. On the contrary, our cult of honour is idolatry, but we must submit to it as long as the idol is accepted.'—XXVII., 297.

It is on account of his suspicions of the actual worth of human activities that he has a preference for the clergyman or the doctor who is not full of the phraseology of his profession. Possibly these very suspicions render his eye for humour the keener. And when everything seems to fail he has a final refuge in this philosophy which Wüllersdorf reads to Instetten :—

'To stand in the breach and hold out till you fall, that is the best. But, before that, get as much as possible out of little things, out of the merest trifles. Have an eye for the blooming of the violets, for the Luisendenkmal surrounded by flowers, or for the little girls skipping in their high-laced boots. Or make a journey to Potsdam and visit the Friedrichskirche where the Emperor Frederick lies, and where they are beginning to build him a mausoleum. When you stand there, consider *his* life, and if that does not bring you peace, then, indeed, there is no help for you.'—XXXV., 365.

Unwiederbringlich shows some difference from *Effi Briest*, not so much in the author's fundamental beliefs, as in the intensity with which they are held. He appears more oppressed here by the futility of human endeavour; he is scarcely able to forget the power of predisposition, if not of predestination, over human conduct. His heart goes out to Holk in what he holds to be the inevitable shipwreck of all his hopes. But he adds something to his list of such things as may refresh the tired struggler with the difficulties of life. He concedes that the truly pious will often find in their religion a passing consolation without, however, concluding that it is an unfailing support. Most characteristic of *Unwiederbringlich* is the length to which he carries the view that experience confers the right to make sweeping statements. There is undoubtedly something of a reaction from his customary lack of dogmatism in the unqualified nature of such generalisations as are here exemplified:—

If need be, one may wage war against one's sister, but not against one's brother-in-law.—IV., 26.

All Portuguese are really Jews.—X., 84.

The character is more important than the heart.—XVIII., 157.

A clergyman can tell anything.—XXI., 196.

In love the moment rules.—XXX., 276.

The outstanding merit of both novels is the character drawing. In particular the character of Effi is drawn without any perceptible flaw. *Unwiederbringlich* will be remembered also for its brief descriptive passages, although these are too clear-cut and cold to please the nature enthusiast. *Effi Briest* has more definite claims to high standing. There is further its style, so free from every form of weakness and so suitable to the subject; and then its masterly proportionateness. It is undoubtedly worthy of a place among the great novels of the nineteenth century.

CHAPTER VIII

SENTIMENT AND SOCIETY: *Irrungen, Wirrungen; Stine*

FONTANE has been seen in *Effi Briest* to recognise how powerless is the individual against the concerted customs and working beliefs of mankind, as it is represented for him by the society in which he moves. In *Irrungen, Wirrungen* and *Stine* he watches the struggle of the individual armed with his strongest weapon, personal sentiment, to cleave a path for himself.

Irrungen, Wirrungen aims at depicting the utter hopelessness of the love of a son of the aristocracy for a daughter of the people. The legal union of such a pair cannot be effected without results that would render it intolerable; while an illegal union must prove finally even more disastrous. Each of them may, however, in recognising the practical impossibility of their union, achieve a certain philosophic content. Incidentally, the novelist is showing something of the life of the junior officer and of the woman, not however of the loosest type, with whom he may associate.

The reader grows more and more conscious as the novel advances that the attachment between Botho and Lene cannot in reason hold its own against the influences which combine to oppose it. The exigencies of the man's

career, the obedience he owes the unwritten laws of his class, and stronger still the duty he owes his family name, all against his pursuit of an ideal, grow more sharply defined as time passes. Again, there is the disturbing knowledge that his companions treat attachments of this type mainly in the light of a joke. The straightforward and reasonable girl, such as Lene, who is not and has no desire to be an actress, grows perhaps more quickly aware of the unattainableness of her heart's desire, but not therefore less quick to take what the moment offers. Yet Fontane, while allowing and occasionally even a little insisting that the best is lost for Lene and Botho, brings one to see, chiefly through his illustrations of the type of thing that annoys Botho, that given normally balanced people there is no need for recourse to desperate measures. This rests ultimately on the fact, which Fontane is sufficiently the artist not to mention, that life itself is generally worth while, if one can save oneself not necessarily from great misfortunes, but at least from grave mistakes. Botho's marriage scene leaves the reader with the impression that the hero will eventually think of his desired happiness with Lene as an absolutely impossible dream, not something rendered impossible by the force of circumstances. Fontane gives an excellent picture of the life of the young officer and the woman with whom he associates; but he definitely chooses the most decent and orderly side of that life. The conduct he presents, although irregular, is treated so urbanely that the casual reader would hardly recognise it in its true light; there is a characteristic lack of insistence on the 'points'

which the average novelist makes so fully. A young nobleman and officer rescues a girl of the people from a possible danger. He feels attracted to her. Despite the love she cannot and will not conceal, the girl foresees that her hopes cannot be realised. Eventually the man also, against his truer sentiments, abandons the fight with circumstance. Both are married to others, with the prospect of at least not leading miserable lives. This is the plot, which is emphasised only slightly by occasional symbolic touches.

Apart from the reports of Käthe's holidaying, which are, at all events, too full, the extraneous matter would seem to group itself round Uncle Kurt Anton, and Dörr and his wife. But Kurt Anton is a typification of the social feeling against which a young man of the Rienäcker class and character appears to carry no armour; what is grouped around him cannot therefore be regarded as extraneous. On the other hand the Dörrs are scarcely necessary to the plot. It is true that Frau Dörr is used as a mouthpiece for the introduction of Lene, but this cannot be considered justification for her presence; while a foil to Lene is not essential. It would seem as if Fontane had made here a concession to his liking for the good-hearted, middle-aged woman with a questionable past.[1]

The characters are drawn from the aristocracy and from the uneducated classes; servants are negligible, and children are wanting. Men and women of varying ages appear. On the whole, the names carry little significance; but the speech is in most cases excellent.

[1] Cf. the quotation on Frau Espe in the chapter on *Quitt*.

There is nothing obviously contrary to reasonable probability.

Botho von Rienäcker is a young aristocrat of average character, but with desires and sentiments that go deeper than do those of the majority of his fellows. Not headstrong, he is yet not afraid of the mere opinions of others. Attracted by good style, he prefers, nevertheless, simple truth to smart chatter.[1] Rather given to an elegiac tone, he has that sympathy and thought for others that mark him as a gentleman. Far from being boorish, he has no particular admiration for what he finds taken as culture. His morals are, broadly speaking, those of his fellows, but he dignifies them by a graver attitude, and by an avoidance of cynicism. Moreover, he is possessed of some of that childlikeness of heart which Fontane frequently attributes to older men amongst his characters. It is perhaps that which definitely gains him the reader's sympathetic appreciation, if not commiseration. His speech shows up well in contrast to the talk of the men from his own circle. Without striving after effect, he introduces into his plain and straightforward manner a slight touch of that irony which is natural to the educated mind.

Lene Nimptsch is a girl who, while her morals are not exactly all that they ought to be, is as nearly moral as one could be under similar circumstances. Without deceit, she longs for Botho's love, although conscious that she can enjoy it only as it were in passing. Her sanity springs in part from her reflectiveness, which is

[1] An abundance of this commodity forms one of his main objections to Käthe.

continually bringing her to examine her position. She is not anxious for display, but maintains her common sense, a liking for work, and a belief in the mutual duties of men. She is neither passionate nor sensual; and she prefers finally to touch solid ground, rather than to continue amongst the clouds where she cannot build a home. Her speech faithfully reflects her unostentatiousness and honesty of purpose. Her silence is often eloquent, and her words frequently suggest more than they actually express.

Frau Dörr is a very successful subsidiary character. Good-hearted, ingenuous, given neither to boasting nor to boldness, she carries conviction in her direct speech on such matters as she assumes to fall within her competence. Käthe von Rienäcker is another excellent sketch. She is a superficial young person, with an unrestrained delight in material pleasures. Vivacious, chattering, a lover of quip and jest, she is possessed of a manner of speech which is obviously an effortless dropping of useless words.

There are four further good suggestions of character: Uncle Kurt Anton, genial, but decided and immovable; Dörr, miserly, but not to the point of ridicule; Mother Nimptsch, maintaining her spirits, although her day of usefulness is past; and Gideon Franke, the very sane and progressive conventicler.

The scenes show the usual variations from group scenes to those in which only one character appears; the former are often not wholly played out,[1] while the latter

[1] Cf. most particularly the dinner scene at Rienäcker's, before Käthe's departure, Ch. XVIII.

may contain scraps of monologue. The chief value of the scenes lies almost invariably in the conversation. None of them are really dramatic: that which offers the most dramatic possibilities, the rescue of the girls from before the steamer, being only reported, and not presented. The death of Frau Nimptsch is not dramatically handled;[1] while the arrival of the party to break the solitude of Botho and Lene at *Hankels Ablage* is consciously deprived of much of its effect by the novelist, by the manner in which he foreshadows it.[2] No definite rule is discoverable as to the ordering of scenes in direct sequences.

The general setting is formed by Berlin and its environs. The incidental settings differ, however, greatly in character throughout. Exteriors and interiors interchange; amongst the former are to be noted the street settings, which are not familiar in Fontane. The garden settings incline to fullness more by suggestion than actually; the power of suggestion may be judged from the following passage:—

> The whole garden exhaled freshness and perfumes: for right up the main path, between the currant and gooseberry bushes, grew stocks and mignonette, whose fine perfume mingled with the stronger odour of the thyme-beds. In the trees nothing stirred, and only fireflies flitted through the air.—V., 145.

The indoor settings, varying from the Baron's apartments to those of Frau Nimptsch, and from Hiller's restaurant to the inn at *Hankels Ablage*, are generally

[1] Ch. XIX. [2] Ch. XIII.

given more by impression than in detail. The panoramic setting takes the unusual form for Fontane of street views during Botho's cab-ride out to the cemetery.

In only one connection can there be any suggestion of disproportionateness in *Irrungen, Wirrungen*: it may seem that the novelist has at times allowed the reported action to become too heavy. In the matter of the first meeting of Botho and Lene he may even be suspected of seeking to avoid difficulties. Nevertheless, despite the shortness of the novel, it will be seen on maturer reflection that such reports as those of Lene's management of the removal into the town and of Käthe's doings on holiday do not weigh too heavily on what is actually presented.

Slight as is the texture of *Irrungen, Wirrungen*, that of *Stine* is still slighter, although it may make a greater impression on the mind of the reader. This short novel repeats to some extent the theme of *Irrungen, Wirrungen* that there can be no satisfactory outcome to the love of a son of the aristocracy for a daughter of the people, but it mingles with it that other favourite theme of the novelist that there are individuals who cannot achieve happiness. Involved in his presentation of the theme is the demand for new blood amongst the nobility; while he makes the utmost of his opportunity to expose the realistic philosophy of a woman of the people who sees nothing damning in her irregular past and present.

Despite the sentimental tone, which is hardly in keeping with Fontane's natural manner, one is brought

to feel that Waldemar, the hero, cannot extricate himself from his unhappy condition. The spectacle of a young man, not endowed with more than the average will, endeavouring to induce his people to look with a friendly eye on a step they must abhor, is, when as here skilfully presented, in itself sufficient to produce a mood of gloom. While the novelist, in his silent method of illustrating the contrast between Waldemar and his uncle or Baron Papageno, gives the reader an unprejudiced, yet full, opportunity of judging the hero's possibility of success in his search for happiness. Again, the case for new blood in the nobility is obvious, but although some members of the class admit this themselves, it remains certain that each man will content himself with conceding that another may marry beneath him. The realistic philosophy of the woman of the people comes to the reader exactly as it leaves her, cut and dried. Yet it has life, being neither a category nor a catechism. If he do not accept it all, the reader, recognising the general strength of its basis, cannot fail to be impressed by it.

The plot may be told in a few words. A young nobleman, who is in weak health on account of wounds received in the Franco-Prussian war, is brought by a rather thoughtless uncle into contact with a young workgirl. The girl proves herself virtuous and he loves her. Finally, under the impression that he has reached an unshakable decision, he asks her to marry him; she, however, refuses, on the ground that such a step could not have good results. Utterly discouraged, he makes what provision he can for her, and then commits suicide.

The novelist seeks to strengthen the plot, even more than in *Irrungen, Wirrungen*, by symbolic devices.[1]

Fontane shows exceeding care as regards extraneous matter. Even the strictest examination suggests only that the Baron's disquisition on the advantages of his own and the disadvantages of the Count's dwelling is too protracted, although it serves to break the one mood which the novelist, in his truth to life, does not wish always to hold sway.

The characters show a mixture of adults of both sexes and varying ages. They are arranged in the main so as to contrast men of the aristocracy with women of the people, or one may perhaps say here women of the lower class. There is also one child, belonging to the latter class. On the whole the names call for no comment; while the excellent variation of the characters lends itself to significant differences in the speech, of which Fontane, if not successful at every turn, has produced good examples.

Count Waldemar, the hero, is a young man of melancholic temperament, aggravated by his weak physical condition. Good-hearted himself, he seeks some one of a tender and compassionate nature. Willing to bow to some extent to the laws that be, he is definitely desirous of working out his own salvation. One may recognise already in this, his fundamental weakness, an inability to do without compromise. He does not seem to appreciate the fact that no one can go in the teeth of the world,

[1] Thus the reader will grow a little weary of the very obvious symbol of the setting sun which the novelist seems unable to forget.

and yet find it pleasant. Through his willingness to break with the race pride of the nobility, one becomes aware that he has thought to some degree on the lasting value of things. The novelist, however, does not insist on any of his qualities save his desire for compromise and his longing for love; accordingly his speech acquires a too permanent elegiac tone. And as with the atmosphere of the novel, so with Waldemar himself, there is an overplus of sentimentality, arising from the very effort to avoid it.

Stine is a young work-girl, whose sister has had a chequered career she does not wish to repeat, although she cannot bring herself to condemn it. Her supreme desire is to lead an honest life. With admirable feelings and a reflective cast of mind, she cannot fail to attract Waldemar, who would have been repulsed by the so-called attractive girl. This does not in itself, however, remove that blot on her speech which lies in its recurrent over-correctness, and the use of expressions not her own. Nevertheless, with her ingenuousness, her simple pleasures and simple ambitions, Stine is a very probable character; and this the more so when one sees that she does not lose herself in dreams, and that she does not despise her sister's worldly wisdom. She wants to hold Waldemar as long as possible, but she is the victim of no delusion as to being his wife; and the reader having perceived the common-sense trait in her does not doubt that she cannot alter her decision.

Pauline Pittelkow is the woman of the people whose philosophy the novelist endeavours to express. She takes life not as an art but as a business in which some measure

of success is absolutely requisite. If the measure of success can be achieved without incurring any odium so much the better, but at all costs it must be achieved. Not wholly devoid of real feeling, she is incapable of genuine sentiment. Essentially a woman, she attempts to draw attention to herself always, save when she takes it into her head that housework is more important. Her joy of possession is open and avowed. She has an undoubted grip of all such things as concern her; one feels that in every case she has a preformed judgment that needs only to be articulated. Her eminent reasonableness is shown in her indifference to all such things as do not concern her. Correspondingly she keeps to the language over which she has attained a mastery. She is not a woman one likes, and yet one cannot altogether dislike her; but perceiving that she takes herself seriously, one would be chary of crossing her. As with her language, so with the whole character, Fontane has been successful through his wise restraint. It would want but little to convert Pauline into a freak, but the reader is never apprehensive that that little will come from Fontane's pen.[1]

Count Haldern, Waldemar's uncle, is a gay old bachelor in love with women, wine, and, above all, the smartness of his own tongue. As he is at bottom definitely stuck in the views of his own class, much of what he says has no actual application to himself and his. His aim is to create an impression, and, in consequence, where the reader feels his remarks to be

[1] Pauline's summing up of the male characters, Ch. VI., 39, recalls a similar venture on the part of L'Hermite in *Quitt.*

somewhat forced, he may be paying a silent compliment to the novelist's skill in the reproduction of speech. On other occasions the questionableness of his remarks is more marked, perhaps, than is the case with any other of Fontane's characters.

Fontane's power of outlining character is as well exemplified here as in *Irrungen, Wirrungen*. There is Baron Papageno, the harmless man of the world; Wanda Grützmacher, the vain, loose, but not callous actress; Frau Polzin, the prying and niggardly landlady;[1] and Olga, a calculating, but, considering the circumstances, very natural young girl.

Although there is the usual range in scenes from the group scene downwards, those with two characters outnumber the others. Monologue is employed. A distinct unity is formed by the scenes from Stine's refusal to Waldemar's suicide;[2] but it is never Fontane's aim to secure such unity in an artificial and superficial manner. There are several street scenes centring round Waldemar and Olga in which fleeting characters appear; they are the best street scenes to be found in the novelist's work. Scenes containing dramatic potentialities are intentionally modified, the last scene with Stine being an admirable illustration of restrained power.[3] Many of the scenes have a sentimental touch uncommon in Fontane.

Over the settings the novelist has not expended any

[1] Some of whose comments are excellent.

[2] The continuity of the opening scenes is broken by Olga's visit to Wanda.

[3] Ch. XIV.

great labour. Most detail is devoted to Pauline's best room, the fantastic mixture of cheap and dear in its furnishings being a conception which Fontane himself enjoyed.[1] In the other indoor settings he gives only the suggestion of something personal: so Waldemar's Italian lamp, Stine's embroidery-frame, the Baron's little wine-cupboard. The street and a public park supply most of the outdoor settings, which really do not rise above impressions of Berlin, grudgingly given.

No transgression of the laws of proportion is discernible; *Stine* must undoubtedly be classed, from the point of view of construction, amongst the best of Fontane's novels.

Irrungen, Wirrungen is not necessarily to be accepted as an adequate title. Admitted that it points in a sense to the nature of the main action, the fact that the chief characters are from the beginning aware of the path they are treading rather weakens the idea underlying it. The title *Stine* is called in question by the criticism levelled at the novel by R. M. Meyer [2] and H. Mielke.[3] They consider that Stine is overshadowed by her sister, Pauline. These critics would seem to miss the point, which is that the quieter sister is fundamentally the stronger character through her very womanliness; they would appear to have been blinded where the hero was not by the more obvious qualities of Pauline. The whole

[1] So particularly the bookcase, empty save for twelve volumes in leather of Hume's *History of England* and bundles of the *Berliner Pfennigmagazin.*

[2] In *Die Deutsche Literatur des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts.*

[3] In *Der Deutsche Roman des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts.*

action turns upon Stine's transparent honesty and her final refusal; and the title is therefore fully justified.

There are points of agreement and disagreement in the chapter management in the two novels. Thus, in both, he gives the chapters no headings and establishes no definite relationship between chapter and scene. Also the chapters frequently run right on,[1] a position largely induced by the fact that the novelist follows mainly the fortunes of two characters only; yet of these two characters neither is brought in in every chapter. While in *Stine*, however, there are continual variations in the length of the chapter, there is in *Irrungen, Wirrungen* a distinct tendency towards establishing an average. Again, while in *Stine* the chapter endings all point more or less obviously forward, there is in *Irrungen, Wirrungen* a continual mixing of types, endings either pointing forward, falling away, or being marked by a high conversational note.[2] Asterisk divisions are employed in both novels, either to avoid extremely short chapters or else mark off the differing groups of characters in a single scene.[3]

Letters are employed in both novels. Those from Waldemar to his uncle and to Stine [4] reflect his attitude to the situation and emphasise his weariness of spirit. In *Irrungen, Wirrungen* the letters serve to expose

[1] Though longer or shorter time intervals may be taken to intervene.

[2] Examples of these : Ch. XI., Ch. II., Ch. VIII., in the order stated.

[3] This use is extended in *Stine* to admit of the immediate contrast between the scene in Pauline's and that in the Polzins'.

[4] Ch. XV., 104 ff.

character [1] and to summarise the existing position of affairs.[2] Lack of appreciation of these letters entails lack of appreciation of the novel itself.

For a work by Fontane, *Irrungen, Wirrungen* is remarkably destitute of verse. On the other hand, *Stine* has something unique to show in the form of the farce played in Pauline's rooms.[3]

In neither novel does the novelist actually interpose himself between the characters and the reader; but in both he experiences the desire to take the reader into his confidence. In certain places he has given way to this desire,[4] but not in order to jeer at or even to be jocular about the characters.

Both novels employ to advantage differing methods of character exposition. Author's remarks are in neither case laboured, and may apply to characters previous to their introduction.[5] The interchange of personal remarks between the characters is of value throughout. The psychological analysis is always brief,[6] but in the case of the chief characters adequate; while the other characters can hardly claim much attention in this respect. The novels differ as regards the use of incident in the exposition of character. Apart from its actual

[1] Cf. that from Lene to Botho, Ch. V., 153 f.

[2] Cf. Botho's letter from his mother, Ch. XIV., 219 ff.

[3] Ch. V., 32–3.

[4] So in *Stine*, Ch. XV., he refers to Waldemar as 'our friend, 'our sick man.' In *Irrungen, Wirrungen* the examples occur only at the beginning; but the reference in Ch. I. to 'our tale,' is none the less strange in Fontane.

[5] So in *Stine*, to the Polzins; in *Irrungen, Wirrungen*, to Dörr.

[6] Save in *Stine* of Waldemar during his last hours.

crisis and catastrophe, *Stine* makes excellent use of small incident, affecting, however, the minor characters;[1] while a similar excellent use in *Irrungen, Wirrungen* has regard to the chief characters.[2]

In general the style of both novels leaves the reader uninclined to be critical, even if that of *Irrungen, Wirrungen* occasionally produces a rather heavy impression. Cases of inadequateness or incongruity are not found; and transitions in style are made easily and without clamour. In *Stine* there is a marked tendency to form short sentences beginning with 'and'; but this is hardly a mannerism that leads to any confusion. Moreover, Fontane is at his best here in the construction of those short sentences in which every word is of importance.

Berlinisms are more noticeable in *Stine* than in any other of the author's works, but even here there is no consequent effort at their employment.[3] Considering its length, *Stine* may be held to contain too many foreign words, and the use of these at times appears forced; *Irrungen, Wirrungen* has comparatively many borrowings from English, and also a few bold hybrids.[4] In the matter of numbers the borrowings from French come

[1] So one sees the old Count throwing out the lilies, Ch. IV.; or offering Stine a seat in his carriage, Ch. XVI.; or Papageno studying the sparrows, Ch. XI.

[2] So one sees Botho placing flowers on Frau Nimptsch's grave, Ch. XXII.; or giving money to a street singer, Ch. XXI.; or Lene turning her back on Botho and Käthe, Ch. XVI.

[3] But *Jöhre* (*Kind*) and *Harfenjule* (*herumziehende Harfenspielerin*) cannot be overlooked.

[4] Cf. *Garçonschaft*; *Tischdéfilé*; *Sportsleute*.

first in both novels, followed by those from Latin. There is a very limited introduction of foreign phrases which are practically confined to French and Latin.[1] The proverbs in *Irrungen, Wirrungen* force themselves upon the reader's attention.[2] In both novels the rhetorical question is much in evidence, and it may be thought to lose in strength by this continual use. Neither is there any single example to surpass the best previously noted in other works. Common in *Irrungen, Wirrungen*, unfinished sentences are very much less noticeable in *Stine*. Parentheses recur regularly in both novels, but those in *Stine* are more likely to attract attention.

The habits, manners, and opinions of men and women form by far the greater portion of the subject-matter in both novels. The study of the child Olga in *Stine*, which seems almost promised, is never carried out. These men and women are, moreover, treated of with direct reference to the existence and results of class differences. The relationships between Botho and Lene and between Waldemar and Stine never become the subject for a moral inquisition or disquisition. Dress receives the scant attention customary in Fontane; but he lingers longer than usual over facial expression.

Animate nature is almost entirely neglected, save for a few passing remarks in *Irrungen, Wirrungen*, and some observations on the habits of sparrows in *Stine*. In *Irrungen, Wirrungen* Fontane again shows his interest

[1] In *Stine*: *noblesse oblige, qui vivra, verra, la grande roue de l'histoire*; *omnia mea mecum portans, beati passidentes.* In *Irrungen, Wirrungen*: *en vue, tant mieux, cher ami, nous verrons*; *error in calculo*; she is rather a little silly.

[2] So: *Alte Liebe rostet nicht*; *Mit den Klugen ist Gott.*

in flowers, both garden and wild varieties.[1] Otherwise it is difficult in either novel definitely to group the subject-matter under adequate heads. The question of the continual intermarriage of the Prussian nobility forms in *Stine* an exception.[2]

Although there is no corresponding change in Fontane's fundamental attitude to his country, which is always one of loyalty, there is much more criticism directed against it in *Stine* than in *Irrungen, Wirrungen*. In the latter novel again the praise meted out is more directly confined to the Mark and its inhabitants; he confirms and applauds a widespread characteristic in the following terms :—

'When the people of our Mark marry they do not talk of passion and love, they merely say : "I must set my house in order." And that is a beautiful trait in the life of our people, and not at all prosaical. For order is much, and at times everything.'—XIV., 226.

This quotation from *Stine* illustrates the difference in the mood. Baron Papageno is speaking of the sparrow :—

'He peeps in everywhere, wants to know everything, wants to have everything—the pure Prussian in the general history of birds.'—XI., 62.

More especially in *Irrungen, Wirrungen* Fontane appears animated by a feeling which is much more akin to live sympathy with human weakness than is the rather aloof

[1] Especially his favourite stocks and mignonette.

[2] Cf. especially Ch. XI. The remarks of General von Bamme in *Vor dem Sturm* may be recalled.

tolerance which characterises several of his novels. But neither this nor the nature of the action suffices to substantiate the statement so confidently made by H. Mielke that in these two novels he 'drew close to the naturalistic movement.' The term naturalism as applied to writings of the period signifies to all appearance animalism; and however much Fontane may flout convention he would be incapable of, not to say undesirous of, emphasising the sensual side of man. Much rather he inclines to regard man as being possessed of resources not adequate to the achievement of his higher designs; while the individual cannot, save in small matters, maintain his individuality. In consequence, he decries insistence on would-be consummate virtue and integrity. One of the fruits of experience is this admission :—

> One may find oneself in the position of having actually to oppose what one has oneself recognised as valid.—*Stine*, XI., 64.

Any man whose character has but slight blots should consider himself fortunate, not set himself on a pedestal. Probably one would do wrong to attribute these words of von Rexin without reserve to Fontane, yet they are undoubtedly in his spirit :—

> Naturally virtue and similar beautiful things exist, but innocence and virtue are like Bismarck and Moltke, namely rare. Such views have become part and parcel of my life; I consider them right and intend, as long as things last, to act in accordance with them.—*Irrungen, Wirrungen*, XXIII., 295.

In a world in which there is so much making the best of

things, one must walk warily. A realist could hardly choose a better device than this :—

> One must look everything squarely in the face, not allow oneself to be deceived about anything, and especially not deceive oneself about anything.—*Irrungen, Wirrungen*, V., 151.

In *Irrungen, Wirrungen* the novelist tempers the idea of people being born to unhappiness, pointing rather to the hope of attaining to some measure of happiness, provided no fight is made against the inevitable loss of the best. In *Stine*, on the other hand, he is definitely opposed to all half views; Pauline's philosophy is decisive :—

> 'Believe me, child, one may recover from an unhappy love and start fresh very well, but not from an unhappy life.'—*Stine*, X., 58.

Yet it is true that the elegiac mood [1] seems to engender a sentimental attitude foreign to such a philosophy.

Stine is the more finished of two novels which both reach a high standard of excellence. While the character drawing in *Irrungen, Wirrungen* does not fall below that in the shorter novel, the style does not reach the same level. Moreover, *Stine* has a faultlessly proportionate construction, whereas that of the longer novel, if beyond all serious objection, cannot compel such superlative praise.

[1] This mood is so marked as to allow of one, apart from the fact that Fontane could never contain himself sufficiently to write a true '*Novelle*,' comparing *Stine* with a '*Stimmungsnovelle*' by Storm.

CHAPTER IX

Poor Nobility: *Die Poggenpuhls*

Whereas the general significance of the situations in *Stine* and *Irrungen, Wirrungen* is to a considerable extent lost in the personal application, one is bound to feel that the individuals in *Die Poggenpuhls* are, without thereby becoming lifeless, representatives of a class.

The novelist seeks to depict the manner of facing life adopted by a long-descended aristocratic family that has fallen on very evil days. This is relieved somewhat by the exposition of the points of view of two other members of the lesser nobility: one an elderly man who has achieved a certain success along the recognised lines, the other a young man who has broken with the tradition.

Fontane succeeds admirably in his aim. His success is due to the simplicity of his method and the masterful manner in which he follows it. None of the lines in his drawing are heavy, but all are distinct. The conversation is so arranged as always to provide the reader with something of the philosophy of one of the Poggenpuhls, without thereby becoming unnatural. There are no conversational passages specially designed to mirror the opinions of the speakers without reference to the general *vraisemblance* of the conversation; yet the talk

can never be disregarded. Similarly, the author's own remarks, although giving no impression of having been expressly compounded, are most effective in their sparing use. The canvas looks in the beginning like that of *Frau Jenny Treibel*, too large in outline for all that is filled in; but when the work is regarded as a whole this stricture cannot be made. The introductory portion does not inevitably lead one to expect more than is given; and whatever is employed, is employed to the same end. When one realises that the novelist is not dealing with one attitude but with a comparison of several attitudes, one must admit that the economy of the book is sound.

Properly speaking, a plot does not exist in *Die Poggenpuhls*. The death of General Eberhard von Poggenpuhl, resulting in the appearance of some financial assistance to the family, does not provide anything in the way of an actual *dénouement*, inasmuch as the financial aid is not such as is going, for example, to restore the Poggenpuhls to their former state. Nor does it even bring about a decisive grouping of the characters: Wendelin the reader never meets, and Leo is not present in the final scenes. If there were a properly constructed plot, it is almost certain that Flora Bartenstein and Esther Blumenthal would become of importance, and not remain really outside the action. And to these one might add von Klessentin and the gentleman who saved Sophie from death. It would appear as if the illustration of the family from its different sides has taken, in the author's mind, the place of a regular plot, but that he has been unable to avoid the suggestion of such a plot.

The characters are composed of men and women

belonging to the aristocracy, apart from the old servant Friederike and one or two very incidental figures; their ages vary greatly. It is to be noticed, however, that the two elderly ladies belong to the aristocracy only by marriage. The maiden names of these ladies, Pütter and Bienengräber, offer a standing and very obvious contrast to Pogge von Poggenpuhl. The speech maintains an excellent level throughout.

Of the three sisters, Therese is full of the pride of race which she nurses as her only possession; consequently she is opposed on principle to all acts of the other members of the family which tend in her opinion to lower the name of her forefathers. She confines herself to courting the favour of others whose material fortune has not suffered a like decay to her own. She is not devoid of feeling and bears no malice against the others of the family, although she has no useful accomplishment to show. She is, if one will have it so, the ghost of a great lady; and great ladies have a right to consider themselves ornamental.

Sophie can do anything in art in a small way; and she does it to the advantage of the family purse. Needless to say, she has no pride of race; but is always thankful for what she can get. Yet she is never stodgy and never mean.

Manon, the youngest of the sisters, is a rather flighty girl, who is, nevertheless, not devoid of a calculating ability. She also has lost her pride of race, without acquiring any practical ability in its place, save that of making much out of little as regards the appearance of her dress. She plays Therese's own game in a franker

and fresher fashion amongst the plutocracy, even amongst the Jewish plutocracy. She is a bright companion, indeed, but one can hardly entertain any real respect for her.

Leo is a well executed portrait of a young lieutenant without means, always on the look-out to supply that deficiency. He is addicted to hinting at schemes he will undertake if nothing turns up; although one feels that he has no intention ever of beginning such a venture. He is selfish, certainly, but in a gay and spirited fashion which is attractive to others. One is not inclined to throw much mud at him, for if he be a drifter, he is not a blackguard. Luck, not merit, must bring him advancement, if it is to come; and he has that superficial smartness that invites luck. His speech, especially in Chapter III., is skilfully reproduced. The short sentences aim at effect, humorous or otherwise; they are scintillating and, like the speaker, without ill-humour and without depth.

While the reader does not meet Wendelin, the elder brother, who cannot be omitted from any survey, he gains a fair impression of him from the remarks of the author and of the other characters. A sober, steady, able man, who is not entirely wrapped up in himself, for he gives Leo money to come to visit his mother, he is determined to push himself steadily forward and at the same time to restore the fortunes of the family.

General Eberhard von Poggenpuhl, the uncle of these young men and women, shares with Leo the honour of being the best presented character in the novel. In common with Leo and Manon, he believes in good fortune,

but one does not suspect that he ever went far out of his way in search of it. Besides, he has obviously not been absolutely adverse to exertion on his own part. He is fond of life and of making others fond of it; without being coarse he detests prudishness, and he does not despise the pleasures of the town. Mindful of the feelings of others, cheerful, good-hearted, if not very full of knowledge, he is a very human old general.[1] His speech is his nephew Leo's, only mellower and with a natural increment of body; moreover, it does not aim so consciously at effect, for the uncle is not so personally jealous of success as the nephew.

Frau von Poggenpuhl, the mother of the family, and Frau von Poggenpuhl, the General's wife, may be taken together. Although less fully given than the foregoing, they may easily be distinguished as examples of the same character modified by circumstances which have differed. In them is a woman without pretension, but not weak, loving her people, but still able to criticise them; bearing up against bad fortune or good with a fairly equal mind and an unadvertised faith in Providence.[2]

Friederike is the ever-faithful servant, satisfied with little, and sure of the truth of her belief that there is something about the Poggenpuhls that there is not about rich people who might pay her better wages. If one is inclined at times to question the nature of her speech,

[1] He should be compared with Colonel von St Arnaud in *Cécile*.

[2] A blot on the mother's speech is her calling Friederike a '*Hausinventar*,' Ch. VIII., 299.

one should always recall that the effect of long association with the family must make itself felt in the manner and matter of her remarks.

Psychological analysis of character is not of great importance in *Die Poggenpuhls*. The exposition of character depends chiefly on the general remarks of the author and upon those interchanged amongst the persons of the novel. Thus the reader has a fairly full idea of the brothers and sisters, before he meets one of them;[1] and as has already been seen Wendelin is intelligible only through the remarks passed upon him. The interchange of remarks relative to character continues throughout of importance. In a novel of the nature of *Die Poggenpuhls* it will not be expected that incident will loom largely in the exposition of character, but while this expectation is certainly fulfilled, it does not follow that incident can altogether be overlooked. And instances of Fontane's skill in emphasising his characters or throwing new light upon them by the use of small incidents are not wanting.[2]

The scenes vary in the usual manner from group scenes to those with only one character. Of the group scenes some are merely suggested by touches;[3] others come before the reader through the medium of letters.[4] A superficially direct interconnection of the scenes is not

[1] Ch. I. is greatly devoted to this presentation.

[2] Cf. the congratulatory visit of the General to his sister-in-law on her birthday, Ch. VI. Leo eating his supper in the kitchen, Ch. V. Therese producing the gorgeous mourning outfits, Ch. XIII.

[3] Cf. the theatre scene, Ch. VI.

[4] So in Chs. X. and XI., particularly the rescue of Sophie.

maintained. On the whole the scenes are short and undramatic,[1] the conversation being always the main and at times the sole interest.

Die Poggenpuhls is distinguished from Fontane's other works by the marked infrequency of outdoor settings. The flat occupied by the Poggenpuhls in Berlin, the position of which is so carefully described, is by far the most important setting; it is indicated, however, only in an impressionistic manner. Thus one learns of the the room with one window, but with three beds and a sofa, of the paintings of the family heroes, of the gilt-edged mirror; but it is characteristic of Fontane's method, as opposed to that of the precise realist, that one is not told of the old piano until Chapter VI. is reached. Other interiors, as the General's residence, the theatre, the restaurant, are dealt with in the most summary fashion. Plainly Fontane paid little attention to the matter of settings.

The question of proportionate construction is one that cannot be examined, before reference has been made to the judgment of R. M. Meyer on the work as a whole.[2] He writes :—

> *Die Poggenpuhls* is more a loose piecing together of clear scenes from the life of a poor aristocratic and military family than a novel, although the two misalliances, which beckon from the background and come ever nearer, bring a certain unity into the subject-matter.

If a definable plot be taken as essential to a novel, *Die*

[1] There is a certain dramatic element about the General's appearance at the family party, Ch. VI.

[2] In *Die Deutsche Literatur des Neunzehnten Jahrhunderts.*

Poggenpuhls, as has already been seen, could not be held to fall within the category. If, on the other hand, action without formal plot be deemed sufficient, as is apparently Meyer's view,[1] the work may be termed a novel, although its claim may not be strong. On these grounds it is here dealt with as a novel. In the second part of his judgment Meyer would seem to err. Granted that the misalliances do on an occasion beckon, they scarcely come any nearer, and one never feels that they are about to be realised. Moreover, they afford no unity to the subject-matter, the novel closing in a manner in no way connected with them. What does actually unify the work in a certain measure is the possibility, shared by each member of the family at the close, of a partial new development based upon more liberal means.

Examined as a novel in respect to its proportionateness, *Die Poggenpuhls* shows one apparent and one real defect. The apparent defect lies in the proportion of speech to reflection: when, however, the vital import of the conversation to the exposition of the characters is recalled, and the total length and particular composition of the novel is taken into consideration, the proportion will be seen to have been maintained. The real defect lies in the proportion of reported to described action. In a work consciously bare in its action, the novelist has gone too far in removing much of what exists from before the immediate eye of the reader.[2]

The title is the most fitting possible. The chapters,

[1] In accord with the modern tendency to make the category 'novel' as elastic as possible.

[2] Cf. especially Sophie's letters from Adamsdorf.

which show little variation in length, are short. They have no regular relationship to scenes; and may or may not pass directly into one another.[1] The chapter endings but rarely point forward in any degree, and only on one occasion is there anything approaching a dramatic close.[2] Mainly the endings are formed by remarks, which if trifling on the surface, are yet more or less characteristic of the speaker. The close of the novel itself offers the finest example; Manon observes :—

'Yes, Father, I had forgotten him. Curious, fathers are almost always forgotten. I shall speak to Flora about it. She once said something like that, too.'

Asterisks are employed for the subdivision of chapters, but not in a regular manner, even where they stand between letters.[3] They are frequent in the later chapters,[4] but cannot be said to justify their use on any other grounds than that of avoiding exceedingly short chapters.

As has already been seen in other connections, the use of letters is important. Sophie's letters from Adamsdorf[5] do not only serve to report action; they also comment on the characters of the General and his wife, and illustrate certain points in the writer's own

[1] Where this is not the case, the same characters, nevertheless, frequently appear.

[2] Close of Ch. XII., with the probable death of the General.

[3] Cf. the lack of uniformity in this matter in Chs. X. and XI.

[4] Thus Ch. XIII. is subdivided four times, which seems in so short a chapter to present too broken an appearance.

[5] From Ch. X. onwards.

character. The letter from Leo to his mother,[1] and those that pass between him and Manon [2] at once throw light on the character of the writer and indicate something of the position of affairs. A newspaper notice of the General's death is given.[3]

There is no intervention on the part of the author, and only one case of taking the reader into the author's confidence.[4]

The general effect of the style is one of soundness, straightforwardness, and yet lack of monotony; it is, throughout, admirably in keeping with the subject. There is no pressing for effect. It is in every way a ripe style; one feels the master writing as he knows he cannot fail.

The vocabulary is marked by an occasional Berlin word.[5] Although the borrowings outside those from Latin and French are practically negligible, there are from these languages alone more than enough for so short a work. On the other hand, foreign phrases are few.[6] Proverbs point the general effect here and there.[7]

[1] Ch. II., 250 ff. It is to be noticed that this letter is read aloud and commented on by the hearers.

[2] Ch. XI., 325 ff.

[3] Ch. XV., 360. It differs from that on Gordon's death in *Cécile* in not being the reader's sole source of information.

[4] Ch. XV., 359: 'our Nebelung.' Contemptuous of the loafing concierge.

[5] So the use of *Schlauberger* for *Schlaukopf*; but the author himself calls attention to the use of such words.

[6] Cf. *tout à vous, enfant perdu, à la bonne heure*; *lupus in fabula.*

[7] Cf. *Gut Gewissen ist das beste Ruhekissen. Kommt Zeit, kommt Rat.*

In the use of unfinished sentences and of the rhetorical question the novelist is temperate. If one would, at all costs, find some defect, one would remark that parentheses were too common.

The chief subject-matter consists of certain very definitely constituted men and women, their way of life and their opinions under particular circumstances. Both animate and inanimate nature are practically neglected.[1] Food and feeding receive attention. The comments on character interchanged between the persons of the novel at times become more general; in this way the average Berliner is brought to book :—

> Uncle Eberhard never grew tired of asserting, 'Well, one may love these Berliners or hate them, they are certainly amusing; and to look at them in this way is always as good as a play. Indeed, it is something of this kind : for they are always looking round to see if they have an audience before whom it is worth while to raise the curtain.'—XII., 340.

There is a fair amount of consideration of the theatre, of dramatic pieces, and the acting of parts.[2] There is some derogatory criticism of Wildenbruch's *Die Quitzows*, particularly with regard to the nineteenth century language which is asserted to be used in the dialogue.[3] With reference to the pictures in the church at Adamsdorf, Biblical writings are freely touched upon, which is

[1] More especially on this account it is interesting to notice Fontane's return to felines in his remarks on the tom-cat at Adamsdorf.

[2] Centring round the actor and ex-soldier von Klessentin, Ch VII.

[3] Chs. VI. and VII.

not common in Fontane. Historical anecdotes are not entirely lacking.[1]

Again, the novelist silently argues for moderation and toleration, and is averse to passing final judgments. He seems to regard life in some measure as a game to be played with a certain amount of decorum, but not with very great earnestness. For much that men at times belaud is nothing but vanity; so he considers the hollowness of a great name :—

'Let us take something rather that lies very much nearer to us, let us take for example the great name Hildebrand. There are, I think, three famous painters of that name, or the third may have been a sculptor, it does not matter. Yet if Hildebrand is mentioned anywhere, more especially about Christmas time, no one thinks of pictures and busts, but only of little dark blue packets with a gingerbread on the top and a string round about it.'—VIII., 303.[2]

Nevertheless, he never allows that life is not worth while, and considers nothing so useless as grumbling. Judged from *Die Poggenpuhls*, Fontane's range of interest would not appear large. Knowing from other works that this is not fundamentally the fact, one concludes that the attention he pays here to the apparently trifling things in human nature and conduct has been purposely intensified in order to establish beyond doubt his belief in the significance of these apparent trifles.

[1] It is interesting to note that Leo's idea of a moneyed canoness as the very best patron for a young officer, on account of her small personal expenses, is realised in *Der Stechlin* in the person of Aunt Adelheid.

[2] The reference is to the Berlin confectioner.

Such an attitude allows of a continual re-birth of interest. There is never an excuse for a man falling into a dead-alive condition; in the words of the General :—

'One has always the game in one's hands and is precisely as young as one wants to be.'—IX., 307.

Apart from the defect in proportion already noted, *Die Poggenpuhls* is undoubtedly the consummation of what the author proposed to himself; finish is obvious on every page. The characters themselves, however, command the most admiration : without being in the least degree laboured, they are clear and lifelike to a fault.

CHAPTER X

A Liberal Conservative: *Der Stechlin.*

If in *Die Poggenpuhls* Fontane moves within a very circumscribed area, in *Der Stechlin* he allows himself the fullest freedom of movement. Mainly for this reason his last work of fiction is longer than the others, save *Vor dem Sturm.*

His chief purpose in this last work was undoubtedly to express, through varying characters, his ideas on the life and activities of man in such a manner as to lead to common toleration amongst the component parts of society. This necessarily involves a plea for the avoidance of dogmatism on great and small matters. Thus he comes to put little faith in schemes for reform, but urges one to look for the real regeneration of society only from the spread of a generous and unenvious spirit between man and man. At the same time, through his representation of the condition of the people round Stechlin, he suggests that things are by no means wholly bad as they stand. Again, through Stechlin, through Waldemar, through Lorenzen, and even through Melusine he pleads for naturalness, decrying all spurious development of the individual character. Other themes varying in importance and in the stress laid upon them cannot be overlooked. Thus he desires to show that

it is possible for a man loyal to the King and to the monarchial form of government and proud of his country's past to have liberal and enlightened opinions. There is a definite attempt to paint the life of the lesser nobility of the Mark,[1] and to induce the belief that the country will be the poorer for the loss of men of Stechlin's type. A desire to say something permanent on England and the English is apparent. Illustration of the attitude of the serving class towards its employers is again attempted. And, finally, the substantiation of his views by means of apposite anecdotes becomes almost an end in itself.

Thanks to his excellent conversational manner—which but rarely exhibits stiffness or artificiality, Fontane succeeds in giving the reader a generous impression of his attitude towards life and affairs. As one is brought to feel how little, if any, difference exists in the ultimate values of all ways of life, one comes to regard all men and their schemes in a tolerant spirit, or at least to recognise the folly of being up in arms with others because their motives do not agree with one's own. But if toleration is to reign supreme all dogmas must be revised, and if re-accepted, then only on the basis of universal consent. For the novelist certainly induces his reader to believe that every dogma, however high its apparent moral value, is in reality contrary to the true spirit in which one should envisage the problems of life and other men's efforts at solving them.

[1] The introduction of Count Barby testifies in itself to Fontane's conscious avoidance of the typical Prussian higher nobility, for Barby has about him something 'almost English.'

One is led to perceive that every individual is necessarily so limited in his knowledge if not in his appreciation of facts that no genuine seeker after the truth, if he be endowed with a becoming modesty, will ever claim to have found it beyond a doubt. Nevertheless, there is some, possibly inevitable, indefiniteneness about Fontane's exposition of his position at times. He does not in any appreciable degree convey to the reader his personal dislike for schemes of reform, chiefly because he does not trouble to go deeply into particular instances, and therefore does not weaken the reader's consciousness that such things are not necessarily always to be viewed from a sceptical standpoint. While he makes it evident that a generous and unenvious spirit is essential to a permanent state of society, if one is not content with what exists, one must feel that the simple presence of this spirit will not of itself establish a better order. And if he succeeds in part in inducing one to believe that existing conditions have many good points, one suspects that he does so by keeping to limited data. He most certainly fails to induce anything approaching conviction. On the other hand there is no evading his plea for naturalness in life;[1] one must believe with him that people should develop along natural lines and not nurse superimposed tendencies.[2] People who have not developed

[1] Its success is evident in one's preference for Stechlin over Adelheid, for Waldemar over Rex, for Lorenzen over Koseleger, for Melusine over the Princess.

[2] As Adelheid cultivates her hatred of vanity, while remaining proud of her ancient lineage; as the Princess cultivates her democracy while remaining an autocrat; as Koseleger his religion, while retaining his vulgar ambition.

in a natural and open manner are seen to be a greater tax on one's toleration even than those whose characters are not in themselves attractive.[1] While it cannot be disputed that Fontane gives sufficient evidence of the possibility of combining a liberal spirit with loyalty to the King and veneration for his country's past, he would not in this appear to have the power of compelling disciples. But this is certainly not due to the presence of chauvinistic rhetoric. Although continually touching upon it, the novelist gives one very little grasp of the life of Adelheid as a canoness; with the life of the Prussian 'Junker' as exemplified in Stechlin he is most successful. This arises from his method of following the everyday movements of Stechlin in an easy manner, and of never forcing anything upon the reader; assistance is derived from natural and unpointed contrasts with other members of his class. No comparison is definitely drawn between Stechlin and that type of 'Junker' from which the name obtains its current significance. Fontane's efforts at making something of weight out of his English experiences do not impress one in any particular: he is very superficial and apt to fall into the mistake of seizing every opportunity of saying something smart, irrespective of its exactness. Again, the novelist is not very successful in bringing the reader to believe that the dying out of such men as Stechlin will be a real loss to society; for, although one comes to know the man as a friend, one cannot rid oneself of the feeling that there is a certain emptiness about his life that is inappropriate

[1] Thus one prefers the plutocrat Gundermann to Koseleger.

to the modern conception of the relationship of the individual to the State. One may at times think that it is a noble passing, but one does not regard it as premature. As in earlier novels Fontane shows a definite conception of the attitude of servants to their employers, so much so that despite the lack of depth in his treatment one is not unwilling to accept his presentation of the case.[1] Finally, one must admit that the novelist has fully justified his use of anecdotes. This justification rests upon the unstrained character of the greater number of the anecdotes and upon the unadorned but delightful fashion in which they are recounted.[2]

Has *Der Stechlin* a plot? The book opens with a description of the lake of Stechlin, the village of Stechlin, the castle of Stechlin; then, previous to his introduction, comes a character sketch of von Stechlin himself, strengthened by a selection from his sayings. One might well look for a plot to develop round Stechlin, but this does not happen. There is not so much likelihood of the development of a plot round the son, Waldemar von Stechlin. It is obvious that he will marry Armgard, despite the objections of Aunt Adelheid; more especially as one never looks for Aunt Adelheid to resort to anything in the way of desperate measures. Her view that he must marry a native of the Mark is part of a principle kept mainly

[1] More particularly in the cases of Stechlin's faithful Engelke and of the Berlin girl, Hedwig.

[2] There are occasional blots, such as Thormeyer's story of the purification of the abducted Eastern princess, which is merely boring.

out of pride and which may in fact be modified without great difficulty. On the other hand, there are characters around whom a plot might have formed itself,[1] if the author had been so disposed; but no move is made towards the construction of a plot that must have been in a sense outside the main interest of the book. Nevertheless, *Der Stechlin* is not a collection of unconnected scenes; if without plot, it is not without design. Indications of what is coming are at times to be found. Indeed, the interest is directed forward with regard to the three chief events in the book: Stechlin's parliamentary candidature, his death, and Waldemar's marriage. More easily than *Die Poggenpuhls*, *Der Stechlin* may be classed as a novel.

The characters, who are exceedingly numerous, vary greatly in age in the case of both sexes. Fontane would seem to have assembled, and in a fashion to have ordered according to his personal predilections, representatives of all the classes that he has drawn from in previous novels. There are representatives of the nobility, more particularly of the lesser nobility, of the professional and artist class, of the servant class, and of the guardians of the peace. On the plutocrat he touches but lightly, while reference only is made to the working class. It is to be observed that such of the characters as are officers cannot be taken as representative of a specifically military caste.

Major von Stechlin is the bearer of a name which has a ring of the Mark about it. He is above all a man with his heart in the right place. He dislikes at once

[1] Such as Melusine, the Princess, von Czako.

rigid schemes for the betterment of society and merely repressive measures. His feelings rather than his reason tell him that many ideas with which he is not wholly in agreement are sprung from the attempt to do away with conditions of which he does not himself approve. But if he seems to lack decision here, he can make a stand when he is assured it is necessary. Neither a bully nor a meddler, he remains critical of those around him, and thus he never wholly gives his heart to any man. One suspects that Fontane is speaking also of himself when he remarks :—

——For old Dubslav was not very keen on friendships. He perceived too clearly the faults in each individual. —XIX., 245.

Indeed, there can be little doubt that the novelist has put much of himself into this character, however dangerous it may remain to determine the individual points of likeness and unlikeness. Stechlin is fond of a pleasant chat, coloured by a bit of scandal; yet he is no lounger in smoke-rooms. He likes to walk the land to which he is so attached. If he is not full of learning, he surprises now and again by the extent of his reading. Unable to enter into problems of the moment or problems of all time in the manner of the dialectician, he prefers to reserve his opinion; but his preference is certainly strengthened by his desire for ease and retirement. Where he breaks from his retirement, he is addicted to ceremonial. Gentlemanly as a rule, his treatment of his sister Adelheid is on occasion

very cavalier. The off-handedness which is apparent in his attitude towards pressing political questions arises in part from his habit of questioning all things, a habit which is shared by Fontane; in part, however, it springs from his admiration for Prussia's past and from the conviction that nothing in its future can rival its achievements under Frederick the Great. Nevertheless, he is inconsistent, for he exclaims :—

'People are always saying "impossible." Pooh, what is impossible? Nothing is impossible.'—XXXV., 413.

Determined to order his own life in his own way, he is unwilling to do any injury to others save where it is absolutely imperative as the result of this determination. In brief, he is an individualist who has not lost sympathy with others. The novelist has very justly fitted the speech to the character. The short sentences, often mere phrases, that he employs, are indicative of his averseness to entering very deeply into any subject. Where his language inclines to appear dogmatic, an incidental qualification or query almost always alters its complexion. If he is led into any exposition of his views, his language fittingly is much less effective. On the whole, it is as frank and transparent as the man himself.

Waldemar von Stechlin, the Major's son, is a Junker of pronounced liberal tendencies, who nevertheless can make himself liked in royal quarters, which he is ever careful not to offend. And if he is inclined to raise the giving of no offence near to being a principle,

he will not sacrifice his own sentiments.[1] He is careful of his appearance, without being a dude; and he is unhypocritical in such subjects as art, where his knowledge is actually limited. Not in a marked degree imaginative, he never gives the impression of standing on solid ground; in producing this impression as regards the pupil of Lorenzen, the novelist has given definite proof of his belief in the importance of influences on the development of character. Yet Waldemar is reliable: his reliability, his unassertiveness, and his occasional pettifoggery can be recognised beyond all doubt. If one looks upon him at times as something intermediate between the Major and Lorenzen, one is inclined in the end to consider that family tradition will outweigh intellectual sympathy. Nevertheless, there is no certainty of this; and the absence of certainty is a tribute to Fontane's skill in presenting a character which, while provoking the reader to form a judgment, renders any judgment of merely tentative value. In agreement with his lack of assertiveness, Waldemar says but little, more especially when others have no apparent end to their volubility. Apart from the fact that his speech is neither forceful, nor yet devoid of all strength, it is in thorough agreement with his character, inasmuch as one can come to no definite conclusion as to its quality.

Pastor Lorenzen is a character of great interest; he is the logical outcome of Fontane's favourite clerical

[1] So he goes his own way in the matter of his marriage although he knows it is contrary to the hopes cherished by Aunt Adelheid.

type. Where the parson of this type knows but little of the problems which orthodox theology offers to explain, he pleads actual ignorance. He hopes for the best. Where his predecessors are kindly in a direct way to their fellow-men, he is a utopian dreamer, sometimes almost an active revolutionary. Where his predecessors are extremely broad-minded, one doubts in company with Stechlin whether he is a clergyman at all. Yet out of respect for the feelings of others he enters willingly into ceremonies which have become unnecessary to himself. If this be considered a moral weakness, it is not to be supposed that the novelist is attempting to draw a character without a flaw. Unwilling to give offence, Lorenzen is unwilling also to be an occasion of stumbling to others; in consequence, while he does not deny the opinions he holds, he does not trumpet them abroad. He inclines, viewed from another point of vantage, to be secretive: most frequently he merely suggests the things which he has at heart, for he sees that they cannot in the near future be brought to pass. So he can support Stechlin, the Conservative candidate, not only because he is aware of the fundamental goodness of the old man, but also because he distrusts the prevalent Socialist aspirant to political power. Moreover, he is touched by a hero worship which would in itself prevent him from blindly condemning the past; thus he says:—

'Admiration is also an art. Something is required to perceive greatness in the great.'—XXIX., 364.

It is somewhat surprising to find blots on Lorenzen's

speech, but they undoubtedly exist. At times he uses ordered sentences of moderate length and a pleasing vocabulary which combine to give the impression that the speaker does not desire to force a conclusion; but while this is as it should be, at other times the novelist causes him to speak in a manner which he has transferred to him from Stechlin.[1]

It may be that one is right in reading into the name Melusine the suggestion of a woman at once attractive and out of the common. Certainly the elder of Count Barby's daughters lives up to such an interpretation. Her attractiveness is derived mainly from the freedom and frankness of her conduct. If, however, as it would appear, Fontane wished to bring the reader to like this woman, he has been only partially successful. The natural assumption of ease under all circumstances is too liable to drift into forwardness and lack of restraint. Yet there is decency of feeling, if not goodness of heart, beyond what is suggested by her rather sharp tongue; her qualities would not, however, as the novelist plainly shows, ever be lovable enough to hold Waldemar. In keeping with her international experience and her mixed blood, she is quick, well-informed, and free from all parochialism. In the matter of her speech the novelist has made the same blunder as with that of Lorenzen. It inclines, even more than that of the Pastor, to grow too like that of Stechlin; at its best it exhibits obvious differences, being more decisive and more apt to overwork illustrations and allusions.

[1] This is particularly noticeable in Ch. XXXVIII., where he recounts the experiences of Lt. Greeley.

Count Barby's younger daughter, Armgard, is not so well drawn as her sister. She remains even more indefinite than Waldemar, a consummation which one can hardly credit the novelist with having planned to achieve. Her rare remarks throw no light upon her. One recognises that she is of cultured and modest manner, and well-disposed towards others; one learns that she is reserved, but not without powers of enjoyment. One would expect from a young woman with these qualities some great though subdued passion. Armgard manifests no such passion; and yet Fontane is careful to avoid stamping her as a doll. Her reticence ought therefore to be the outcome of depth, and not of shallowness; the reader detects no true signs of depth in her.

Adelheid von Stechlin is the old-fashioned, straight-laced lady, full of piety, and yet obviously devoid of the spirit of religion. She dislikes all things new, and in a general way everything not immediately connected with the Mark, although as she is not unintelligent she does at times admit the exaggerated nature of the position she adopts. More than her brother she is set on building up again the house of Stechlin; for she is convinced that it would be folly not to do the utmost to preserve an old family. It is on this account undoubtedly that she is the readier to forgive Waldemar for marrying one whom she really looks upon as a stranger; for Armgard brings a large dowry. Tending to appear somewhat ludicrous through her dress, as through her strangely distant manner, she yet preserves a certain natural dignity which is augmented by the

display of vigour in a woman of her age. She is uninformed, and in a sense uneducated, but she puts great faith in her own judgment. Fontane, however, adds a crowning touch to this admirable portrait, in suggesting the partial ascendancy acquired over her by the glib steward, Fix. Her speech is properly smart after its own fashion and very decisive; it is more matter of fact even than that of Melusine, and rightly deficient in allusion.

On turning to the lesser characters, one is at once struck by the preponderance of the males over the females. A few of these lesser characters, such as the irritable pianist, Wrschowitz, and the trusty *gendarme*, Uncke, approach the caricature. Some also show too great a proximity to type. Thus von Czako, although one is supposed to take him for something superior, is merely the traditional witty officer. Von Rex, although the novelist protests against it, is the typical righteous place-hunter. Of this class, Engelke, the faithful man-servant, is the fullest and best drawn. He is a little sentimental, but speaks with authority; while preserving all due deference towards his master, he has attained to a footing almost of equality. Fontane has been careful to keep his language within the bounds of probability. Krippenstapel, Princess Ermyntrud, Count Barby, however, show definite individual touches. Krippenstapel is the Prussian schoolmaster who in his own estimation knows everything and on whom everything depends. He combines bee-keeping with archæology, and succeeds in giving himself a rather distinguished air as a result. He is strictly deferential

to his social superiors in any matter of form, but, and this is his most marked characteristic, he is oblivious of rank where knowledge of facts is concerned.[1] The Princess is in part the traditional altruistic lady, full of humility and submission, in whose hands, nevertheless, her husband is but a puppet; but she breaks with the tradition when she abandons the submissive pose in an impossible attempt to convert Stechlin. Count Barby is liberal in his views, as becomes his varied experience; he is fond of the society of young people, without being envious of their youth. At the same time he cannot be classed with the traditional kindly man of the world, for he does not try to monopolise the conversation. Amongst the slighter sketches the most successful are those of Koseleger, the unctious and ambitious ecclesiastic; of von Molchow, the wit amongst the local gentry; and of Agnes, the half wild child who attaches herself to the dying Stechlin.

As in *Die Poggenpuhls*, so here, the remarks of the author or those interchanged between the characters themselves are the chief aid to the exposition of character. The author has much to say of Stechlin before he actually introduces him to the reader; neither are his remarks on him or on the lesser characters confined to any particular category. He is able, where he thinks it imperative, to render the outward appearance of the persons of the novel as clearly as could be desired.[2] The remarks interchanged between the characters

[1] Cf. his correction of von Rex on the subject of the Stechlin Church.

[2] Cf. especially his portrayal of the Princess, Ch. XVIII., 233–4.

themselves remain of the highest importance throughout. In the later chapters one finds that immediate psychological analysis of Stechlin becomes more frequent; similar analysis of other characters, even those which may be classed as subsidiary, occurs at intervals.[1] But his practice of this method of character exposition is never regular; often, indeed, he seems to regard it more in the light of an addition than of a requisite. Incident is, relatively to the length of the books, on the same level of importance here as in *Die Poggenpuhls*, and it is definitely of a minor order. The best examples of its use in the exposition of character are to be found in connection with Stechlin himself.[2]

The group scenes are not detailed; many of them never achieve any defined form. Waldemar's marriage, the marriage feast, the election activities, the burial of Stechlin remain with the reader only as impressions. Something more detailed where the whole scene is subdivided is to be remarked. Particularly when there is company at Stechlin's home, this method is followed, each sub-group being treated as an independent unit. The management of these group scenes recalls more than anything else that of similar scenes in *Frau Jenny Treibel*; and this likeness is increased by the presence of continuity in scenes mainly where they fall before, during or after a dinner or an excursion. Despite the long list of characters, scenes with two are frequent, and in these Stechlin himself makes the most numerous

[1] The best example of this irregular work is perhaps that dealing with Koseleger, Ch. XVIII., 232–3.

[2] Cf. his assistance of the old drunkard, Ch. XX.; or his refusal to see the new doctor, Ch. XXXVIII.

appearances. The same holds of the scenes in which a single character appears, and in which monologue is not always found. Scenes with three characters are more prevalent here than elsewhere in Fontane's novels; but it should be remarked that the three are in the greater number of cases the same—Melusine, Armgard, and Waldemar. The nature of the scenes varies greatly, but they agree in being undramatic. Finally, all scenes, although they offer wide variation in their emotional quality, avoid both pure comedy and pure tragedy; this is connected with the fact that their interest is chiefly conversational.

In general the setting alternates between Stechlin's home and the immediate vicinity, and Berlin. Indoor and outdoor settings are in equal favour, while the veranda is not forgotten. Fontane follows two differing methods with regard to indoor settings: he may either leave them very vague, as in the case of the Barby's drawing-room, where, nevertheless, much action takes place, or he may indicate them by their most striking characteristics.[1] Much more deliberate is the description of the convent garden at Wutz, but it is not to be supposed that this is representative of the outdoor settings. On the whole these are restricted to the merest suggestions, even where they are of panoramic order. As in *Die Poggenpuhls*, it is clear that the novelist gave only cursory attention to the matter of setting.

[1] Cf. especially the guest-chambers at Stechlin and the stress laid on the rococo sofa in light blue satin with white flowers, Ch. II.

Judged as a novel, and as such it was put forward, *Der Stechlin* exhibits many faults in proportion. If the proportion of reflection to speech be maintained in the central figure, it is obviously broken in others which are of importance.[1] The introductory matter is too extensive for all that is built upon it. Where the opportunity to commit a similar blunder later on in the novel occurs it is declined, and one draws the inference that the temptation to linger over a typical corner of the Mark was too strong for Fontane. The total amount of conversation is out of all proportion to the significant action, for the author does not achieve here what he has been seen successfully to achieve in other novels, a sufficiency of superficially slight but psychologically important incident. This over-preponderance of the speech is emphasised by the paucity of the descriptive matter. Again, in what action may be definitely determined, the length and breadth of the episodes is excessive as compared with the weight of the main action itself. It would seem probable that these defects are due more to definite policy than to failing powers.

The title may be accepted as pointing to the most fully developed character, even if it is not actually adequate. Although the chapters are numbered consecutively from the beginning, the novel is subdivided into headed sections; these headings cannot be said to represent the fullness of the individual sections which are found to overstep the bounds they appear to impose. The chapters are of an average and moderate length,

[1] So markedly in Melusine and Lorenzen.

inclining on occasion to the short side.[1] They have no regular relationship to scenes; while they vary continually in the matter of immediate connectedness or unconnectedness. Not one of the named sections presents an unbroken series of chapters. Striking endings or such as point forward are very rare;[2] almost all chapters show a falling away at the close, although this falling away may be marked in differing ways.[3] The subdivision of chapters by asterisks is found throughout: it is adopted in some cases in order to avoid the presence of extremely short chapters, in others, however, to mark that splitting up of a group scene which has already been noted.

After the opening chapters, letters are introduced at intervals throughout. The character and purpose of these letters is not, however, uniform. There are letters which are of importance both on account of the information they give and of the light they throw on the character of the writer;[4] others, although containing some ostensible reason for their writing, are essentially guides to character.[5] Neither has the travel letter been neglected.[6] The novel closes with a portion of

[1] So Chs. XVI., XXXI., XLIV., XLV., XLVI.

[2] The ending of Ch. XXV., which is at once striking and foreshadowing, is thus of greater interest than in a more usual type of novel.

[3] As by a scrap of description, a casual remark, an insignificant jest.

[4] Cf. that from Aunt Adelheid to Waldemar, Ch. XVI., 212–4.

[5] Cf. that from von Rex to Waldemar, Ch. XXII., 294; or that from Stechlin to Waldemar, Ch. XXVI., 329 ff.

[6] Cf. those from Armgard to the Baroness Berchtesgaden, Ch. XXXVIII., 454 ff.; and to Melusine, Ch. XLII., 505–6.

a letter from the Countess Melusine to Lorenzen. Further one finds an excerpt from Waldemar's diary [1] and one sermon.[2]

There is no direct intervention on the part of the author, but he does occasionally take the reader into his confidence. In only one of these cases is there a suggestion of that familiarity that borders on contempt in the use of the possessive adjective.[3]

The style bears the marks of maturity; it is obviously the outcome of an unfaltering pen. It is probably not so excellent as that of *Effi Briest*, because it inclines at times to baldness in too forced an effort to avoid everything that might be construed as pretentiousness. On the whole it is very pleasant to read and well adapted to the subject-matter; from this latter quality it will be judged that it is mainly a conversational style. The paragraphs are of varied length, but the longer ones occur in the conversational passages. In his phraseology some examples of too frequent repetition may be noted.[4] Occasionally one meets with words that give one pause.[5] Considering the length of the novel the list of foreign words is not heavy for Fontane: French borrowings are most numerous, followed by

[1] Ch. XII., 152–3.

[2] Ch. XLIII., 509 ff.

[3] This is the reference in Ch. XIV., 188, to 'our friend, Mr Robinson' (an English coachman). It may be compared in tone with the reference to Krippenstapel as 'our fine old museum-keeper,' Ch. XLV., 522.

[4] Particularly irksome are: *Das ist eine Doktorfrage*; *Das ist wie Amen in der Kirche.*

[5] Cf. *Unresidenzlichkeit, Panoptikumbildung, Reinheitswiederherstellung, Gesandtschaftsattachéhaltung.*

those from Latin, while there are a handful from English, Greek, and Italian. There are a few curious hybrids.[1] The use of foreign phrases is moderate,[2] as is that of proverbs.[3] While the unfinished sentence is probably weakened in effect by over-employment, the parentheses, which form one of the chief marks of the style, are generally maintained at a high level. The following, where the reference is to Stechlin, may serve as an example:—

> Here happy days, indeed his happiest awaited him, but they were of short duration. His wife died in the following year. He was averse to taking another, partly out of feeling for propriety and partly from æsthetic considerations. 'For we all believe more or less in a resurrection' (of course, he did not really believe in it himself), 'and if I were to make my appearance above with one on the right hand and one on the left, it would certainly be an embarrassing business.' —I., 7–8.

Men and women form the chief part of the subject-matter. They are considered more with regard to their mental than to their physical qualities; the opinions they hold on other people, on the movements of society, on life in general, are of more interest to Fontane than

[1] Cf. *Retourgang, wegeskamotieren, Äquivokenmensch.*

[2] There are scraps of French conversation in Ch. XXXIV., and of English in Chs. XIV. and XXI. The French phrases incidentally used are common, including: *comme philosophe, toujours perdrix, au contraire, pur sang.* Latin tags are noticeably scarce: *alea jacta est, vanitas vanitatum.* In English one finds: five o'clock tea.

[3] Cf. *Ein gut Gewissen ist das beste Ruhekissen*; *Besser ist besser.*

the deeds they perform. Where the characters are studied in definite action, that action most frequently has reference to the pursuit of some innocent amusement. Animate nature remains virtually untouched, while inanimate nature receives only the scantiest attention. Certainly the novelist stops to look at the flowers from time to time, and he has something to say of the lake; but there is little else. The treatment of topics, which from being several times discussed in conversation attain a certain prominence, is in a sense deceptive; for Fontane never attains through these discussions to any definite formula. Although one section of the novel is entitled *Wahlin Rheinsberg Wutz*, politics in the immediate sense of the word are not touched upon. As in other novels, Fontane remains general and at some points rather superficial in his treatment, indicating more his own liberal conservative position, than investigating the merits of the existent parties. More, however, than in other novels he appreciates the fact that politics must loom large in men's minds, and in consequence he pays considerable attention to the advance and claims of democracy. Again, in treating of religion he ignores the churches as they stand, and makes the characters talk of and more often round the general ideas involved. The art talk never goes below the surface, whether it centre round painting, music, or architecture.[1] There is some criticism of facile story writing.[2] There is the same

[1] In Ch. XXV. there is a more than usually lengthy discussion of the Pre-Raphaelite school.

[2] Through the journalist, Dr Pusch, Ch. XXXIV.

superficiality in the passages dealing with other nations; the following opinion of the English as voiced by Lorenzen exhibits at once the point and the weakness of his method :—

'They have come down terribly over there, because the cult of the golden calf is growing steadily. Mere jobbers, with society in the front. And then so hypocritical : they say Christ and mean cotton.'—XXIII., 298.

More definitely than in earlier books, where some of the conversation may be cleverer and more attractive outwardly, Fontane advances in *Der Stechlin* to the expression of his attitude towards life in the form of a popular philosophy. Nevertheless, his own nature, if not that of his philosophy, prevents his adoption of a thoroughly consequent and self-conclusive system. One cannot even take a single character as representative of himself, however much he may have in common with Stechlin; the reader has still much piecing together to do.

Fontane's connections with England and with the Mark must be borne in mind, but before turning to any analysis of his thought on any matter general or particular, one should recall more especially the fact that the novelist was nearer eighty than seventy at the time the book was being produced. While it is true that he never reached what one would call an old man's attitude to life, in the sense of regarding it as something which was past, the tale of his years must have coloured his opinions in certain directions. The influence of the spirit of the age may be traced in his

interest in the advantages and disadvantages of the advance of democracy, with which in some degree he is in sympathy; as also in his general recognition of the significance of Parliament. Again, one must take into account his patriotism, which, even if it rests in part on a somewhat romantic valuation of the past, is undoubtedly sincere. While obviously not wholly satisfied with the existing system of government, he still maintains that Germany is the leading country in the world; and, although he does not exhibit actual chauvinism, he is not given to praise of other lands.[1] Moreover, within Germany his sympathy lies with Prussia, within Prussia with the Mark.

Fontane considers the beginning of wisdom to lie not in abstract meditation, but in observation, as unprejudiced as possible, of one's fellows. So much is this the case in *Der Stechlin*, that he leaves on one side all else that nature has to offer. But he is willing at times to narrow his field of survey still further; so he arrives at his criticism of the Berliners, whose self-complacent parochialism he frankly exposes.[2] Nor should it be taken for granted that his observation is always directed inward; were it so, he would never have established that liking for 'curly-headed girls.' As a result of his observations, Fontane is inclined on certain matters to adopt a dogmatic tone, which springs from a belief that definite conclusions are not always impossible. One such conclusion, which sounds strange

[1] An exception must be made as regards his tribute to the beauty of Englishwomen, Ch. XXV.

[2] Cf. especially comments in Ch. XII.

in the mouth of an accredited ballad-writer, forms undoubtedly one of the corner stones of his philosophy. It reads :—

'Heroism is an exceptional state and mostly a product of the force of circumstances.'—III., 32.

Yet despite this dictum the novelist does not in *Der Stechlin* appear to feel, to the same degree as in several earlier novels, that man stands under the shadow of a fate that cannot be turned aside. Neither is it to be supposed that he has done more than rescue a few sticks from the sea of doubt; but he thinks of his gains rather than of his incapacity to build a boat to cross. Again, his attitude is more definitely marked by a degree of sentimentality than in most of his earlier work, although it may become peculiarly patent only occasionally.[1] This touch of sentimentality allies itself to his desire to maintain wherever possible a comfortable atmosphere in the romantic shimmer he throws over the illnesses of Stechlin and Count Barby. And it cannot be unconnected with that desire for company, if not for companionship, which expresses itself in these words :—

'To cut oneself off from others is to wall oneself in, and to wall oneself in is death.'—XXIX., 362.

Partly as a result of this conception and partly from a

[1] As when little Agnes breaks down in the church during the funeral service for Stechlin.

lack of confidence in the actual condition of affairs, he holds that the effort to establish society on a broader basis is worth the making. In the words of Pastor Lorenzen :—

> A new time is beginning : I believe a better and a happier. But if it be not happier, at least a time with more oxygen in the air, a time in which one can breathe better. And the more freely one breathes, the more one lives.'—XXIX., 366.

Being then not adverse to progress, and wishing where possible to preserve harmony, he is yet willing to forgo the benefits that accrue to society from discipline. Recognising, however, that all danger to discipline does not arise from ideas of democracy, he sets himself firmly against the doctrine of the superman. Without finding all things pleasurable, Fontane holds that life is worth living. Of others he is content to be tolerant.

Apart from the style, which does not, however, attain to the excellence of that of *Effi Briest* or the appositeness of that of *Die Poggenpuhls*, the value of *Der Stechlin* lies chiefly in the character drawing. But *Der Stechlin* will remain for long of the highest interest to all seeking to understand the attitude of liberal-minded men who yet maintained their loyalty to what was in many respects a repressive Empire.

CHAPTER XI

Conclusion.

The literary connections of a realistic novelist are obviously difficult to determine, once the novelist has passed his apprenticeship. The adoption or adaptation of flights of fancy may frequently be traced with little doubt as to the correctness of the conclusions; but the appropriation of observed fact may as frequently pass unnoticed. Moreover, as it is possible that a flight of fancy in any particular writer may be strictly his own and not as would appear borrowed from another, so the reproduction of, or comment on, any particular form of life found in a realistic novel may be wholly unconnected with any matter, however similar, to be found in the work of a contemporary or earlier novelist. Part of the difficulty of establishing what may be established as regards a realist's literary relationships is removed when it is possible definitely to associate the writer with any known school or group. It has been seen that in Fontane's earlier works the influence of certain groups of novelists cannot be overlooked, however much that influence may differ in degree in particular instances; it will hardly be denied that the existence of so much discursive conversation throughout his novels is traceable to the example of the Young

German school, however wrong it would be to consider Fontane as in any sense attached to that school. Yet one can say that as he came at one time under the influence of Alexis he owns ultimate relationship to Scott, and as he came at one time under the influence of the Berlin group of novelists he owns ultimate relationship to the French *feuilletonists*. In respect of those novels examined in the second half of this study, it is not possible to associate Fontane with any group or school of writers. If *L'Adultera* and *Frau Jenny Treibel* do not constitute him an actual member of the group to which Paul Lindau and Fritz Mauthner belonged, much less do *Irrungen, Wirrungen* and *Effi Briest* demand his inclusion in the younger, so-called naturalistic ranks. That insistence on the sensual, not to say animal side of man, which is the most blatant mark of the naturalistic school, is wholly wanting in Fontane. One would not, accordingly, expect to find any real literary relationship between Fontane and the prophet and priest of naturalism, Emile Zola; nor would it appear to exist. It is true, certainly, that the material for *Irrungen, Wirrungen* and *Stine,* more particularly perhaps for the latter, would more readily suggest itself to one acquainted with than to one ignorant of the naturalistic novel. But the attempt to realise how Zola would have used it, say on the basis of *Nana,* will suffice to show how far apart the writers stand. On the other hand, Fontane shows a likeness to Flaubert in the skilful use of small incident and in the masterly sketching of subsidiary characters; to Daudet in the symbolical touches, in the impressionistic

rather than detailed descriptions of functions, in the anecdotal rather than strictly consecutive manner of narration; to the Goncourts in the directness of character introduction, and the faithfulness to deduction from observation. And if in every case differences which counterbalance the likenesses are forthcoming, it does not follow that Fontane drew no inspiration from the Frenchmen. Certainly he is no immediate disciple, even of French realism as a whole; but it is improbable that that realism did not exert some influence upon a novelist who was continually in the process of development.[1]

Considering Fontane's connection with England and his knowledge of the English language, which if one credit the experiences he recounts in *Von Zwanzig bis Dreissig* must have been extensive, it may be thought a little strange that his fiction should not show any signs of having been influenced by the English novelists. And if one recalls how he schooled himself in the English and Scottish ballads, one's surprise is likely to increase. Nevertheless, whatever similarities may be found to exist between his work and that of any English novelist, it is certain that no genuine literary relationships are discoverable. One may add that the danger of drawing conclusions from similarities, even when they are of the most obvious character, has been definitely exposed by Daudet, with reference to Dickens and himself, in the introduction to *Fromont jeune et Risler aîné*.

It is impossible to proceed with the establishment

[1] Despite the silence of Meyer and Mielke upon this question.

of any final judgment upon Fontane's work without first reaching a conclusion with regard to the speech of his characters. While some critics are of the opinion that all Fontane's characters speak alike, R. M. Meyer maintains that the distinctions in the speech of characters in fiction have never been more finely drawn. It must be remembered that there are two groups of speakers within which the language of the individual is distinguishable only through the variations of emphasis. The first group consists of those who are so far down the scale of society as to have no employment of genuine interest to them, the second, however, of those at the other end of the scale who affect at least the banishment of everything aggressively individual from their manner of speaking. Between these two groups lie the greater mass of speakers whose language receives an individual colouring in main part as the result of the occupations which are followed. Fontane never takes his characters from those at the bottom of the scale; but he does take them frequently from that group which is averse to any crude assertion of self.[1] While it is true that Fontane does at times achieve that distinction without difference in the speech of characters drawn from this group, it is equally certain that he is not always successful in the attempt. On the other hand, the study of the individual novels has shown clearly that it is wrong to assert that there is no variation in the speech of the characters. As so frequently, the truth lies between the two extremes.

[1] So his military men speak as members of this group and not as professional soldiers.

Again, it must be borne in mind that, although Fontane is neither prophet nor preacher, his novels contain always a more or less distinct theme or themes. These themes arise of themselves out of his fiction, as they do out of facts, unheralded and unsought. It is thus not surprising that one should feel in some cases that the writer is in company with the reader in recognising their full character, only when the novel reaches its conclusion.

The decision, for such it must have been, not to attempt to draw characters from the working classes, is one to which Fontane faithfully adhered.[1] Nor is this self-limitation in the matter of character-selection, which would appear to be due not so much to a desire on the part of Fontane to restrict the class of character as to hesitancy in dealing with something with which he was only imperfectly acquainted, without a rather peculiar complement. While Fontane remains partial to the introduction of clergymen, he will not extend this partiality to their wives.[2]

Although, as has been seen, Fontane in general is content with very slight plots on which there is no insistence, he has given proof of his ability to construct and work out an ingenious plot in *Unterm Birnbaum.* That he can maintain the reader's interest in the course of the action itself is further demonstrated in *Grete Minde* ; while the vivid presentation of incident in

[1] Such a character as Stine is obviously not presented in the guise of the work-girl who remains something merely for reference.

[2] The fleeting appearance of Frau Schleppegrell in *Unwiederbriuglich* merely emphasises this fact.

the latter novel has its counterpart in *Unwiederbringlich*. Both *Unwiederbringlich* and *Cécile* are enhanced by well considered, clear, and concise passages of description. More frequently than by any of these excellences, however, Fontane's work is marked by the style. At times, as in *Die Poggenpuhls* and *Frau Jenny Treibel*, this will be best described as wonderfully apposite; at other times, as in *Schach von Wuthenow*, *Grete Minde*, *Effi Briest*, *Stine*, it is in every sense admirable. It is, however, his genius in the portrayal of character that of itself claims for Fontane the chief place amongst the German realists of the nineteenth century. The dawn of this power is already discernible in *Vor dem Sturm*, and it shows itself in certain cases even in his poorer work, as in the portrait of Van der Straaten in *L'Adultera*. It runs, indeed, in greater or less degree, throughout the series of Fontane's novels, maintaining itself to the last. Judged by the character-drawing alone, *Unwiederbringlich* might be ranked little below *Effi Briest*. One must apply the test of proportion finally to determine which of the novels should be taken as showing Fontane at his best. These will be found to be *Effi Briest*, *Schach von Wuthenow*, *Stine*, *Grete Minde*, and in a lesser degree *Irrungen, Wirrungen*.

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